■ News / A3 Pro-Poe colonel gagged

■ Health/Science Patients' lifestyle top concern of heart docs

■ Across / A17 Special polls set in Vizcaya village

■ News / A2 Isabela canvass resumes; Padaca still leads

■ Metro / A22 83 Metro schools to hike tuition

■ Sports Pistons oust Nets, gain NBA East finals

CNN says chem warfare plot uncovered in Mindanao

DOCUMENTS FOUND in the southern Philippines reveal an apparent plot by the Jemaah Islamiya, the Southeast Asian arm of the al-Qaeda network, to launch terror attacks using deadly chemicals, CBN Cable network reported yesterday.

The documents have reportedly been turned over to the American Central Intelli-

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

There were more votes than voters in this town

By Tonette Orejas
(VII Central Luzon Desk)

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO – Perhaps people are tiring of the antics here over the Iraqi Stigma or they don't know how to count.

Saturday, May 22, 2004 ▲ 32 pages / Vol. 19 / No. 164 website: www.inq7.net

GMA urged to resign if ...

Anti-poll fraud groups unite to gather evidence of cheating

By Blanche S. Rivera and Christian V. Esguerra

EVEN as it denied the commander has alleged by a military intelligence report, the anti-election fraud group Pamiraos yesterday did everything that the report said it would, including making a call for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation.

At the call issued by Pamiraos convenor Fr. Joe Dizon was qualified. "If it is proven by demonstration that there is massive fraud, violence and irregularities, and we can prove that it is not a credible election, then the first order of the day is for President Macapagal to resign today," he said.

In a press conference called by Pamiraos at the Bayview Hotel in Manila, a coalition report of "vote-diesel-machinemint and vote-buying, -shaving and -padding was presented to representatives of its member organizations, political parties, party-list groups, retired generals and the media, with the conclusion that the elections were "tainted."

Dizon said Mr. Macapagal should assume

(MORE IN PAGE 2)

DAMNED WIRE and a picture of anti-riot policemen guard the Chino Roces Bridge on Mendiola a few hundred meters from Malacañang. But the Presidential Security Group downplayed the alleged threat. Also, EPP downgraded the alert level from red to blue.

Palace on alert; foes flirting with sedition, GMA warns

By Cl C. Cabacungan Jr. and Ma-an Papa

TROOPS CLAMORE. Malacañang went on full alert yesterday on President Macapagal-Arroyo assured that there were fliers being with sedition if they blocked the proclamation of the winner of the presidential election.

Mr Macapagal issued the warning the same day that the Presidential Security Group (PSG) reassured one of its key officers.

Hardly after a security briefing at the Palace, Mr Macapagal declared that the national security situation was "stable and firmly under control," amid protests of alleged administration cheating in the May 10 elections.

"There are rumbled threat but I can see that there are not serious as they seem in media hype," she said.

But she also declared: "There remains those who continue to undermine the electoral process, present its unusual course to the proclamation of winners, or to cong it on its tracks."

She added: "They are taking on the cover of misplaced public anxieties through an insidious and vociferous media campaign, bordering on the limits of additional behavior."

Mr Macapagal did not name specific individuals or groups.

The President insisted that her

PALACE A11

Gringo: From coup plotter to peace adviser?

By Carlos Pedro

IS IT an invitation he can't refuse?

If he accepts the invitation of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Gringo is "Gringo" Honasan will have come a long way from coup leader to peace-seeker of the government.

Honasan's personal adviser, Raul Sunasa, yesterday said he had received the invitation for the opposition senator "to become an active government consultant on the peace process with both Muslim and communist insurgents."

Sunasa could not say whether Honasan, current chair of the Senate committee on peace, reunification and reconciliation, would accept. Honasan himself did not respond to calls on his mobile phone.

The senator is a member of the executive committee of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino. But before the May 10 elections, he signed an agreement with De Venecia supporting his group, the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. (PGBI), to "promote support for the vigorous implementation of the government programs for peace, unification, reconciliation and development."

The PGBI, of which Honasan is chair and president, is a fraternity of many military and police personnel, both active and retired. It has been accredited as a party-list group.

In a statement, Sunasa said that the invitation to Honasan

(CONTINUED ON PAGE A11)

Poe hacks GMA lead for 3rd straight day

By Cynthia D. Balana and Marvin P. Mariñ

FOR THE THIRD straight day, President Macapagal-Arroyo's lead over chief rival Fernando Poe Jr. shrank in the unofficial count of the National Movement for Free Elections as more votes from opposition bailiwicks poured in yesterday.

Mr Macapagal's lead, yesterday with 56.81 percent of the total number of precincts tallied, Mr Macapagal's lead over Poe fell further to 687,999 votes from 795,706 on Thursday, further in the week, Mr Macapagal

fell below the 1.4-million votes.

The 3 p.m. Namfrel tally showed Mr Macapagal with 7,293,991 votes as against 6,605,142 votes for Poe. The votes were from 1,123,000 precincts out of the total 236,382 precincts.

The Namfrel tally showed votes from Central Luzon, Western Mindanao and Southern Tagalog snatched Poe to further reach Mr Macapagal's lead.

Central Luzon gave Poe an additional 510,000 votes while Western Mindanao padded his lead by 17,889 votes.

FOR MORE RACE A11

THE IEB leading Senate bets may be proclaimed Sunday, says Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., here with Commissioner Florentino Tuason and Borromeo Macalintal, counsel for Ms Macapagal.

Bayan Muna files case vs 13 canvassers

By Marvin P. Mariñ

THEIR PARTYLIST group is on every "dagdag bawas" (cross-cheating/padding).

Thirteen members of provincial and municipal boards of canvassers in three provinces were accused yesterday of shaving votes from progressive party-list organizations to pad the votes for some party-list groups backed by the government.

Party-list Bayan Muna filed yesterday before the Commission on Elections a case accusing the provincial canvassers of "gross fraud of shaving votes from their group and adding them to Angkla Pilipino, Alliance for Nationalism and Democracy (Ang) and the Barangay Association for National Advancement and Transparency (Bantay), groups said to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE A11)

BREAKTHROUGH: Supporters of Isabela Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. try to break through antiriot policemen guarding the canvassing of votes in Ilagan. Dy's opponent, Ms. Grace Cielo Padaca, is leading.

ELERSYON 2004
NAMFREL TALLY

PRESIDENT	VOTES
1 MACAPAGAL, Gloria	7,293,991
2 POE, Fernando Jr.	6,605,142
3 LACSON, Panfilo	1,990,130
4 ROCO, Raul	1,190,256
5 DE LIMA-PEÑA, Eduardo	1,006,106

VICE PRESIDENT	
1 DE CASTRO, Noli	5,817,031
2 LEGARDA, Loren	5,764,751
3 ESQUIVEL, Herminio	3,281,191
4 PADA, Rodolfo	11,865
5 BAUTISTA, Jesus	10,618,417

SENATOR	VOTES
1 ACOSTA, Tito	5,617,849
2 PIMENTEL, Aquilino	5,404,488
3 MAGSAYSAY, Loretta	5,401,031
4 LACSON, Richard	5,387,752
5 SANTIAGO, Miriam	5,211,180
6 OSMEÑA, Pia	5,071,555
7 LIM, Alfredo	5,196,748
8 LAPID, Lito	5,183,021
9 LARA-J, Ana Theresia	5,048,190
10 ESTRADA, Jinggoy	5,051,744
11 MACIAS, Rodolfo	5,047,906
12 MADRIGAL, Roberto	5,194,815
13 MACEDA, Ernesto	5,151,084
14 ENGARDIO, Arturo	5,151,084
15 MACALINDONG, Ernesto	5,151,084
16 ZUBIRI, Juan Miguel	5,218,028
17 ANGARA, Edgardo	5,218,028
18 ROMULO, Roberto	5,218,028
19 LIM, Alfredo	5,196,748
20 LAPID, Lito	5,183,021

COMELEC TALLY	
1 ABAD, Mar	5,036,548
2 ABAD LA, Rene	5,013,625
3 ABANTE, Rene	5,052,028
4 ABARRIENTOS, Evelyn	5,051,425
5 ABATAYO, Mariano	5,026,351
6 ABAYON, Rolando	5,134,121
7 ABEJO, Dino	5,126,655
8 ABELLANA, Rodolfo	5,126,655
9 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
10 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
11 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
12 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
13 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
14 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
15 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
16 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
17 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
18 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
19 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655
20 ABELLANA, Rolando	5,126,655

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Isabela canvass resumes

By Pilarmor Ringuia Jr.
(With Inquirer's Lunzi Serrano)

ILAGAN, Isabela—After a week-long delay because of the resignation of canvass-board members for varying reasons, canvassing resumed yesterday after a hotly-contested fight where a woman candidate is widely seen as the one most likely to end the Dy family's 32-year political reign in this province.

The provincial board of canvassers, however, set aside the certificate of nominee (CoC) for Jun Agustin town after it was noted that the mayor's photo and of the ballot box from the town was missing and the three-color paper seals were broken.

Ms. Ursula Cielo Bulaon of the Adaycon Demokrasiyan party is leading incumbent Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. of the Nationalist People's Coalition in partial and official canvass results of the Commission on Elections.

By late Friday has received 129,600 votes while Dy got 127,782 votes in 29 towns and one city. The results of the "temporary canvass" for Jun Agustin and San Mariano towns were excluded in the official tabulation.

Lawyer Emmanuel Ignacio, chair of the provincial board of canvassers, read the "temporary tally" from the CoC in San Agustin town amid objections. But it was "fabricated." He noted the objection of Mayor Bernardendo and Labor-Christian Muslim Democratic lawyers to the reading of the four Agustin results, and asked them to publicly within 24 hours why the board should exclude the San Agustin CoC.

Temporary tally

Based on the canvassers certificates signed by the municipal board of canvassers, the temporary tally showed Dy with 7,494 votes and Bulaon, 1,346, or a difference of 6,308 votes.

The results, however, differed from that shown in CoC copies held by the National Movement for Free Elections and Bulaon's lawyers showing that Bulaon got 8,823 votes and Dy, 2,820 votes.

Lalo de Leon-Soliel, Pulaon's lawyer, said the authenticity of the San Agustin CoC was "highly questionable." She also questioned the move of BEC lawyers to declare a failure of elections in San Mariano and Jones towns, saying this was a ploy to delay the canvassing.

'Blood debts' due

The provincial board of canvassers on Friday tabulated a "temporary tally" for San Mariano, one of two towns attached by armed men on May 11 while the canvass was ongoing. BEC lawyers earlier asked the Comelec to void the results in San Mariano and Jones towns and declare a failure of elections in the areas because of the attack.

Communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, meanwhile, warned the Dys that they would soon start "collecting" for "blood debts" incurred by the Dys against the people during their reign.

"Kung may isang dapat mag-bayad," Rosal said told the Inquirer in a phone interview (If there are debts, Dyna have to be paid).

Reacting to Dy's complaint that the New People's Army had supported Pulaon, Rosal admitted it had collided with the women candidate, but clarified that they did not campaign for her as revolutionary forces "do not participate in any election."

"We mean the enemies of our enemy are our allies. That's the natural consequence. Many of their (the Dys') victims come from the main base of the revolutionary forces," he added.

Dy had said the rebels were trying to get back at him because he was the only governor who had openly stood up against the NPA. With Bobby T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ARTHRIST policemen block the road to the Isabela provincial capitol as a supporter of gubernatorial candidate Grace Padaca pleads with supporters of incumbent Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. to stay calm. Dy's supporters earlier tried to force their way to the capitol but were stopped by police. (PDI)

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Sto. Tomas tells OFWs to ignore $800 offers

By Blanche S. Rivera

LABOR Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas appealed to overseas Filipinos in the neighboring countries of Iraq not to take the $800/month offers to work in the war-torn country.

Sto. Tomas issued the call amid reports that some Filipino workers in Jordan and Kuwait were still erasing the border to Iraq without proper documentation because of higher pay.

She said employers in Iraq were offering $800 more than the compensation given to OFWs in neighboring countries. They were looking for drivers in particular.

Sto. Tomas said that special envoy to the Middle East Ret. Roy Cimatu had called a command conference of all ambassadors in the area and asked them to continue workers not to accept job offers in Iraq.

"The biggest risk for our workers would be the roadside bombings... so [to the workers] please do not agree to be hired as truck drivers. We know the pay is good but please do not do it," Sto. Tomas said in an earlier interview.

The government has already repatriated 117 of the 94 OFWs from Iraq who have indicated their intention to be evacuated. The remaining OFWs were brought to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates to await their return to commercial airlines for their return to the Philippines.

"Those who want to come home, evacuated. They feel they are no longer safe in doing still be repatriated. If you are a patriot, [we] will," Sto. Tomas said.

The Department of Labor and Employment also announced yesterday that Oman has lifted its travel and employment restrictions on Filipino workers.

The Omani Manpower and Immigration Ministry would start processing the 2,015 job orders for technical personnel, the DOLE said.

Sto. Tomas said that while the government could facilitate the return of the OFWs from Iraq, it could not guarantee that they would find jobs here, adding that DOLE could only help through job referrals and skills training.

Antiwar protesters set up 'pyramid' outside Embassy

ARTIMAS protesters formed a human pyramid in front of the US Embassy on Friday to highlight abuses of Iraqi prisoners by American troops.

About 70 leftist activists gathered above a block from the heavily secured seaside military compound, but were not allowed closer. Some assembled a human pyramid resembling the widely publicized photographs of abused Iraqi detainees in US-run Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

The male protesters were stripped to the waist, echoing the Iraqi prisoners who were stalked.

The Philippines, a former US colony, is one of America's closest allies, and has sent 86 soldiers and police as part of the coalition forces in Iraq, despite protests by leftist groups and church activists.

education.

"The US-led invasion of Iraq is already seeing eight years in the ends," said Daniel Edralin, president of the Alliance of Progressive Labor. "The Iraqi people will never be pacified by any foreign power for anyone knows that the proposed handover on June 30 is a fraud."

The group also charged that the Macapagal-Arroyo administration shares responsibility for the torture deaths of two Filipino workers in separate attacks in Iraq, and called for immediate withdrawal of the Filipino contingent.

Dependent on American military camps where about 43,000 Filipinos, working as cooks and maintenance personnel, have prompted the government to ask US officials to improve security, or have the Filipinos evacuated.

RP set to assume presidency of Security Council in 2005

By Jerome Aning

ASSUMING the Philippines' participation in the powerful United Nations Security Council since it took on a non-permanent seat in the body as "watchdog, campaigner and arbitrator," the country's envoy to the UN said the privilege should be seen as an opportunity to project the image of a maturing republic with its delegate "able to articulate the Philippine position on issues with clarity and reason" when it provides at next month's Council meeting.

Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr., permanent representative to the UN, said he is eyeing renewal as international transfer that Philippine-style diplomacy would try to help sort out involving conflicts in Iraq, the Middle East, Haiti, Cyprus, Liberia, Sudan's Darfur region, the International Criminal Tribunals in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and civilians in armed conflict.

He said the Philippine 10-years learned many lessons in the first few months since the country assumed its non-permanent seat in the body where membership is a privilege sought after by the 191 UN members.

The Philippines would again assume the presidency on September 2005, three months before it ends its two-year term as a non-permanent member. The Philippines was a member of the Council on three previous occasions: in 1957, 1963 and 1980.

ARMY Col. Jose Ciocon arrives at the Manila Centennial Airport Thursday night with a military escort. PHOTO/TJ BURGONIO

Pro-Poe colonel gagged

By Alcuin Papa

AN ARMY colonel who was arrested for allegedly campaigning for opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. has been ordered not to talk to the media by the military leadership.

Maj. Roland Ottawan, the Army's deputy spokesperson, said the Army leadership had decided to gag Col. Jose Ciocon pending an investigation of his case. Ciocon is the deputy commander of the 901st infantry Brigade based in Daraga, Albay. He applied for a leave from March 22 to June 15, but this was cut short on May 15 over his reported electioneering activities.

"He (Ciocon) will not issue any statements to prevent provocative statements and to avoid unnecessary issues if these statements are made," Ottawan said.

He said the investigation would only take days. "It would only drag on during the presentation of evidence by both sides (defense and prosecution). We will also be taking the statements of officers who saw him in Malacañang."

A few days ago, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya said Ciocon was found to have campaigned for Poe among his men and soldiers in Bicol.

Army Chief Lt. Gen. Efren Abu also said some "well-meaning" officers had reported the activities of Ciocon to the military leadership. Ciocon has denied the accusations.

On Thursday, Ciocon was spotted in the lobby of a hotel in Zamboanga City. The AFP's Southern Command immediately took him into custody and flew him to Manila to face investigation.

Upon his arrival at the Centennial Airport Thursday night, he again denied that he was campaigning for Poe, adding that he was apolitical. The Army leadership has placed Ciocon under house arrest inside the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Makati City.

"The Provost Marshal and the Judge Advocate General's Office of the Army are now conducting the investigation (on Ciocon)," Ottawan said.

Abaya had also said Ciocon could be facing violations of the Articles of War for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

The Army has given assurance that Ciocon will "be afforded fair treatment during the investigation based on the Army's rules and regulations."

The AFP and the Defense Department had earlier warned military personnel to stay out of politics during the elections.

Last Monday, the Philippine Army initiated the issuance of an arrest order on Ciocon "for committing acts inimical to the Army's rules and regulations" and for allegedly campaigning for Poe.

The Army said Ciocon was made aware of the arrest order and that he has expressed willingness to report to his superiors to explain his side and undergo investigation.

Can Congress finish canvass on time?

By Christine O. Avendaño

THIS early, it looks like Congress would have a rough time proclaiming the next president and vice president before June 30.

The opposition plans to block a proposal by the Senate and House leadership—which was framed up yesterday—for the creation of a 14-member joint committee to canvass the votes of the top two leaders of the country next May 25.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., one ailing Senate leader Sen. Nikmar Biazon, reminded that the Constitution only provided for Congress to make up the national board of canvassers, and not a joint committee made up members from both chambers.

In a joint news conference at the Manchatic Hotel in Makati City, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia announced that they would present to members of their respective chambers on Monday the proposed set of rules for the canvassing of votes.

"We will try our very best to expedite the results, but there will be no railroading," De Venecia told reporters.

Drilon said the proposal was for the committee to work every day from Monday until Saturday at 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. to canvass the votes.

Under their joint proposal, the committee would be made up of seven members of the Senate and seven members of the House, but most of them members would come from the administration.

In the Senate, Drilon said the contingent would be led by Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and would count as members Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Flavier, Senators Joker Arroyo and Ralph Recto. He said that Senators Ramon Magsaysay Jr. and Manuel Villar would stand as "alternates" for the administration senators sitting as members.

Drilon said the minority would be asked to nominate three senators to complete the seven-man contingent in the Senate.

The House contingent, according to De Venecia, would be led by Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez and would have as members, Reps. Prospero Pichay Jr., Antonio Nachura, Eduardo Rabonza, Mercedes Cabanas, Florencio "Butch" Abad, and Bella Angara-Castillo, who is the only opposition lawmaker from the House minority.

The Speaker said that this was just a "temporary" list of the House contingent members and he will ask for the minority and other political parties to make their nominations.

Drilon had earlier stated that the proposed rules was an adoption of the rules implemented when Congress canvassed the votes cast in the 1992 and 1998 presidential elections. On both occasions, Congress convened a 14-member committee to do the canvassing.

But in a news conference at the Senate, Pimentel said he would challenge the proposal, stating that the proposed set of rules was not "Constitutionally feasible." Kintanar agreed with him.

Drilon disagreed: "If it was constitutional in 1992 and 1998, it should also be constitutional in 2004. We are governed by the same Constitution."

He also stressed that it will not be the joint committee that will proclaim the winners for Congress, "sitting as the national board of canvassers, with each chamber voting separately on the report of the joint committee, which will do the preliminaries."

SENATE President Franklin M. Drilon and House of Reps executives Speaker Jose de Venecia lead members from both houses of Congress in a meeting to iron out the kinks in the canvassing of votes for the presidential and vice presidential elections that will start next week.

RP needs president by June 30 or else, lawmaker warns

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE COUNTRY must proclaim a president before noon of June 30. If it doesn't, this would be "the surest invitation for military adventurism" or it could result in the declaration of martial law.

Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez yesterday gave these two scenarios in the event Congress fails to do its Constitutional duty to proclaim the next president and vice president before noon of June 30.

"A military junta is a remote possibility but not altogether impossible," he said reporters after the news conference of Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia where they announced the proposed set of rules that Congress hopes to approve in canvassing the votes starting next week.

Its just inconceivable and vice president are proclaimed on that day, Gonzalez said the Senate president, who is next in line, could not take over because there would only be 12 senators by that time.

"We would have no government unless the President declares martial law ... What can you do? The President [Macapagal-Arroyo] is still the president up to noon of June 30. And there is no Congress to anybody," he said.

"Or perhaps the military would come in. There would be destabilization unless Congress proclaims the winners and it should be done at least 10 days before June 30 to allow the President to form a Cabinet," Gonzalez suggested.

During the joint news conference held by Drilon and De Venecia, they said Congress was now ready to do its Constitutional duty of canvassing the votes for president and vice president and that both chambers have to proclaim the winners before noon of June 30. They said they were preparing the both chambers to adopt a set of rules that will ensure a 14-member joint committee to do the canvassing of the 2004 elections.

"The Filipino people want this canvass to be completed at the soonest possible time so the country can get back to normalcy, so we can go back to work," De Venecia said.

'Very confident' GMA hosts dinner for LP officials at Palace

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

A "VERY CONFIDENT" President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday received officials of the Liberal Party who not only expressed their support but were certain that she had won a new term.

"We're here wondering what the President has been doing. This is one activity where the President has been doing her homework," Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye told reporters. "There were genuine expressions of support for the President in case she is granted a mandate."

Mr. Macapagal has rarely appeared in public since the elections.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, LP executive vice president, and leading senatorial candidate Mar Roxas, along with 10 other LP members who won their respective electoral bids, had lunch with the President hours before the scheduled top security officials in convening in Malacañang.

Roxas said their party had copies of the election results, "which we know, the President is leading, so we came here to show our support."

"These are impressions, very confident," Roxas said of the President's mood, amid talks of a coup attempt and street protests by the opposition over alleged massive electoral fraud.

Roxas said LP chair Senate President Franklin Drilon and LP president Rep. Florencio Abad did not attend because they would be acting as members of the congressional board of canvassers.

He added that the LP senatorial slate was not invited by the President but came on their own.

"The LP had a meeting two days ago, and we agreed that we did not like the harsh words, the public shouting and we asked to see her to convey these sentiments," he said.

Roxas said the President thanked the LP slate of the parties in the 5+4 administration coalition, for its confidence that "you are really the winners."

Mr. Macapagal, however, lost in Pulse Asia's May 15-16 survey to Manila Mayor Lito Atienza with a new term as mayor.

E-mail: sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

Coke Tigers eye firm hold of No. 2

ALASKA tries to stay alive in the wild chase for the No. 2 quarterfinal spot when it collides with Coca-Cola today in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City.

STANDINGS	W	L
*San Miguel	11	2
Coca-Cola	10	3
Alaska	9	3
Talk 'N Text	9	3
Red Bull	9	3
Shell	7	5
Sta. Lucia	6	8
Shell	6	10
Purefoods	4	12
Purefoods	4	13

*Clinched twice-to-beat in the quarterfinals

4:15 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Alaska
6:30 p.m.—Red Bull vs Purefoods

A defeat hurts out Alaska from the race for the second berth, which gives the team a bye in the wild card phase of the tournament along with the top-seeded San Miguel Beermen.

The Tigers also cannot afford to lose the 4:15 p.m. encounter with Talk 'N Text, Red Bull Barako and the Aces within striking distance of the coveted No. 2 slot.

Though the Tigers keep second place at 10-3, the Aces, Phone Pals and the Barakos are tantalizingly close with identical 9-7 records.

The Barakos, fresh from a victory over the Welcoat Gasoline Rings, meet the skidding Openbooks TJ Hotdogs in the second game at 6:30 p.m.

At any rate, the outcome of today's matches could either prolong or cut the race short depending on how the Tigers will fare against the Aces.

The Phone Pals and the Barakos are expected to silently shout for the Aces or a Coca-Cola loss will keep alive their chances of joining the three-team tie for the top.

John Arigo will not suit up for the Aces this season, giving the Aces additional muscle in the backcourt and an extra lift for guards Brandon Cubbay, Mike Cortes, Rob Dosi and Gabe Freeng.

Arigo, who the Aces' take-charge guy at reconditioning, underwent surgery and therapy on his fractured left knee that took almost three months to heal.

The Barakos are on a three-game roll and are heavily favored against the TJ Hotdogs, who share the cellar with the Sta. Lucia Express at 4-12.

The Express and TJ Hotdogs will still be in contention for the eighth quarterfinal berth the moment Shell (6-10) bows to remaining games.

—John Nirmal V. Guinto

ALEX Cooper of Barako slips away from his marker in Thursday's game.

Montaña, Blu tackle tough rivals

3 p.m.—Sagunto Sta. Rita vs Montaña Classic

Sagunto and Montaña Classic step inside their semifinal quest today as they battle defending champion Tigers Toothpaste and Team Orix-Letran in the quarterfinals of the PBL Unity Cup at the Letran Gym.

The Checkpoint Kings tangle with the Letran-based Team Sparklers at 2 p.m., while the Jawals collide with the unpredictable Knights at 4 p.m.

Lawyers' body asks Comelec to lift gag order on ABC-5

By Marvin P. Marfil

A GROUP of lawyers yesterday asked the Commission on Elections to withdraw its cease and desist order against television station ABC-5 for running a quick count of the May 10 presidential elections saying the directive is unconstitutional.

The lawyers, belonging to the Public Interest Law Center, wanted the commission to lift the order because it violates the people's right to information and the free speech clause of the Constitution.

"The demand is without prejudice to other cases that we can file against the Comelec officials themselves for issuing a patently illegal order," PILC board member Marilu Lambino said in a statement.

In a letter to Commissioner Chase Benjamin Alabar on May 20, the group pointed out that only a rigorous counting can ensure a clean and honest election and this could be enhanced by the quick counts being conducted by the different television networks.

But the group added that the Comelec "unilaterally, arbitrarily, whimsically, without so much a hearing and even a semblance of any kind of due process" issued a cease and desist order on ABC (Channel 5).

This was followed by the proclamation of Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye who said that only printed quick counts can be conducted and these could not be published.

Another blow was struck by the Department of Justice which warned media outfits that they would be prosecuted if they conduct quick counts.

PILC senior lawyer Jayson Ganzhorn said that it could be part of a conspiracy to establish a trend and justify a victory for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The tally of votes of the national elections, whether official or unofficial, is considered a matter of public concern by the Comelec, Manila Electronic Bloodsport for Free Elections or media because it is a matter of public concern. The people have the right to know," PILC said, adding that under Section 7, Article III of the Constitution, the right of the people to information on matters of public concern.

"Your cease and desist order of May 17, 2004 is also in violation of the free quick count of the Constitution," the group added in its letter.

The Comelec on May 17 ordered the television station to stop its quick count saying that it was not authorized and that it has to explain what it was getting its data.

At that time, the vote was leading by 1,329,018 to Roco, pegged 5,197,956, based on 1% count as of 8 p.m. on May 16.

In a press conference on Tuesday, Comelec Chairman Benjamin Abalos said the lists were "cooked and doctored then emptied" before it was turned in Monday night.

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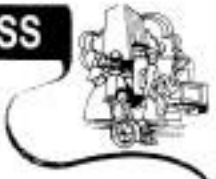
Who should secure an SS number?
A person employed in the private sector including a household helper, a self-employed person, an overseas Filipino worker and a non-working spouse are required to secure an SS number for coverage with the SSS. A household employer is also required to get an SS number for the purpose of remitting contributions for his/her household.
What forms are needed in securing an SS number?
For an employed member/household helper, he/she should fill out SSS Form E-1 (Personal Record), a self-employed should fill out SSS Form RS-1 (Self-Employed Data Record), an OFW should fill out SSS Form OW-1 (Overseas Worker Record), and a non-working spouse should fill out SSS Form NW-1 (Non-Working Spouse Record). These forms are available at all SSS branches. The accomplished forms must be submitted together with the original/certified true copy of the member's birth or baptismal certificate or passport. A non-working spouse must also submit a copy of his/her marriage certificate.
Are there other documents that can be presented if the birth or baptismal certificate or passport is not available?
Yes. The registrant may submit any two (2) of the following secondary documents. Not more than two names and date of birth:
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- GSIS Member's Record
- Certificate from the National Archives
- Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR)
- Birth Certificate of children
- Certificate of Naturalization issued by Bureau of Immigration
- Marriage contract
- Driver's License issued by LTO
- School records
- Voter's ID card or affidavit duly authenticated by COMELEC
- TIN Card
- Life Insurance Policy
- NBI Clearance
- Pag-ibig Member's Data Form
- PRC member's record
- Permit to carry firearms issued by the Firearms & Explosives Unit, Camp Crame
- Certification from the Office of the Cultural Attachés (for Indian, Kingdom, Malaysia, Mandalay, etc.)

What should I do if I cannot remember my SS number? Do I need to secure another one?
No. The SS number assigned to you upon registration is your lifetime number and must be used in all your transactions with the SSS. In case you cannot remember your SS number, you may get in touch with the nearest SSS office in your place. Having only one SS number makes it easy to update your records and process your benefits and loans.
What should I do if there are changes in my personal record?
You have to fill out SSS Form E-4 (Member's Data Amendment) and submit it with the needed supporting documents:
- Change of civil status - Marriage contract
- Name additional/change of name/erroneously spelled name - Birth or baptismal certificate/s of children
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Loser proclaimed winner

Vigilance of townsfolk stops electoral fraud

By Marie P. Hurtado

NOT ONLY in the Bible does the first come in last and the last come in first.

In South Upi, Maguindanao, a mayoral bet was proclaimed winner by the local election officer even though the candidate lost the vote count.

According to military and church officials in the area, incumbent Mayor Israel Tabuso actually came in third in the canvass of votes for the municipality but was proclaimed the winner by Commission on Elections officer Rasky Mamalinta anyway.

But because of the vigilance of local residents, Mamalinta was forced to proclaim the real winner of the mayoral contest—Antonio Tomin—the following day.

The role of what happened in South Upi was brought to Manila yesterday by Col. Felipe Tabao, head of Task Force "Tagis," and Fr. Rogelio Tobialdo, leader of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) in the area.

According to the two, Election Assistant Mamalinta supervised the elections and counting in the municipality as the people manned the canvassing center.

With Comelec leading the canvass, Mamalinta told the people that she wanted to leave the canvassing center for a while.

But before allowing her to leave, the people extracted a promise from her not to proclaim anyone the winner in the meantime.

The next day, May 17, when the canvass ended with Comelec leading the Namfrel count by 527 votes, Mamalinta was asked to proclaim a winner but she told the people she could not proclaim one because of the promise.

To compromise, Tabuso and Tobialdo were able to get an authorization from Regional Election Director Cirelio Calliat to see a faxed copy of the proclamation here.

"We later found out that there had been a prior proclamation," Tobialdo said—that of the loser Tomin.

Yesterday, Tobialdo and Tabao, together with Notified Class Iron Concepcion, went to the Philippine International Convention Center to complain about Mamalinta after hearing that she was at the PICC selling the Comelec commissioners that she had been forced to proclaim Tomin.

"Except there had been no pressure," Tabuso and Tobialdo played for media men a video clip showing Mamalinta proclaiming Cuisia.

The Comelec is holding the canvassing of votes for the senatorial and party-list races at the PICC.

PAL launches e-ticketing for passengers

PHILIPPINE Airlines has begun offering passengers an electronic ticketing facility that allows them to book and pay for flight seats by telephone or through the Internet—a major convenience for customers, who do not need to leave their home or workplace to accomplish these tasks.

The service, introduced last May 1, is initially available for flights between Manila and Cebu, but will be expanded to cover all PAL destinations in the short term. It is part of the flag carrier's strategy to shift to electronic solutions for administrative and commercial processes.

The new facility does away with paper tickets. Instead, the passenger is issued an electronic ticket—a "virtual" ticket" that is stored in PAL computer system—thus eliminating the need for the physical documents.

The passenger starts off e-ticketing through either of two ways. He can call PAL Reservations at (02) 855-8888 in Manila or (032) 340-8191 in Cebu and book his flight through the agents. He then pays his credit card information, which is processed by secure technology over the phone.

Alternatively, the passenger can visit the PAL website www.philippineairlines.com and click "Book and Pay." The system then guides him through the booking and payment process. The latter is likewise by credit card.

In both cases, as proof that the information has been successfully completed, the passenger receives, via e-mail or fax, an "Electronic Receipt" containing his flight and payment details.

Upon check-in at the airport, the passenger simply presents this document, along with valid identification, to obtain his boarding pass.

If the Itinerary Receipt is misplaced, it can easily be replaced for free at any PAL ticket office, unlike actual air tickets, which require a lengthy, tedious process and incur a penalty when lost.

The advent of e-ticketing pushes PAL further along the road to full automation. "This is a major step toward building a comprehensive electronic commerce system in the airline—a strategic investment that we expect will yield long-term benefits," said PAL president Avelino L. Zaperanz.

Elections highlight spread of democracy in Asia

NEW DELHI—In India, more than 380 million people turned out for different rounds of ballots in Sri Lanka, Taiwan, the Philippines and South Korea.

In staggering numbers, Asia has taken to voting this year. And if casting ballots doesn't signal quality governance, the spate of elections does highlight a dramatic change on the continent over the last 20 years: the spread of democracy.

Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia all have dyed democracy and embraced the ballot box.

But democracy is by no means unproblematic. Fueled only by the often-whimsical views of the electorate, democratic transitions are saddled with their idiosyncrasies—whether brilliant statesmen or inept leaders who rise in ways with less luck. It's a system where corruption can derail and demagogues often have broad appeal.

Pilloried for some faults surging for parliament from Indian parties, or the Indonesian general turned presidential candidate who's under indictment for human rights abuses, or the list lights that occasionally break out in legislatures in the otherwise full-fledged democracies of Taiwan and South Korea.

Not easy

"We all understand that building a democracy definitely wasn't to be easy," Palestinian President Clinton Hamilton said recently. "Many human rights and freedoms have been violated since Oslo [the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord] and the road has been extremely hard."

Clem, the first opposition candidate to be elected Taiwanese president, would know. He won reelection in March by just 0.2 percent, his opponent claimed fraud and violence, and protesters staged massive, sometimes-violent demonstrations.

Complicating the situation was a bizarre election-eve shooting that lightly wounded the president and his running mate.

"We still need to walk carefully," Clem said.

But up to the mid-1980s democratic seeds the Asian norm, emerging from Beijing's bruised rule to the kleptocracy of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, India and Japan were almost the few functioning democracies in the region.

Plenty of surprises

Those days, democratic governance are raising check more, with plenty of surprises: the issue to Taiwan, this month's defeat of the Indian government, the impeachment of South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun in March for a minor election law violation, followed by public outcry and his reinstatement by the Constitutional Court.

Certainly there are exceptions. China remains the elephant in the living room, its communist autocracy shielded from much criticism by its immense profit potential. Myanmar, formerly Burma, has become an international outcast under its military regime. Cambodia elects its prime minister. Communist Vietnam doesn't.

The Himalayan nation of Nepal has just passed democratic into reversed, with power returning to the king and riots shaking its streets. In Hong Kong, democratic hopes were labled...for now...after Beijing ruled the territory can't directly elect its own leader.

North Korea remains one of the most secretive dictatorships on Earth.

Gaining ground

Still, with even China holding regularly democratic local elections, the ballot box is clearly gaining ground.

"There's reason for value the diplomats call 'incentive optimism,'" said David Steinberg, an Asia scholar at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. "There has been progress in India, and, yes, we can expect more progress over time. But we can also expect backsliding."

Take the Philippines, where farmers long into Ferdinand Marcos was forced out in a peaceful 1986 "people power" revolt. It was a turning point in Asia, with popular sentiment changing a decades-long pattern of ushering in rapid democratic expansion.

Oligarchy

But a top oligarchy still wields enormous influence, and traditional political mess dominates most elections.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is in power because a second people-power revolt ousted former movie star Joseph Estrada from office. A May 10 election is pitting her against Fernando Poe Jr., also a movie star and Estrada's best friend. More than a week later, with less than half the votes counted, Macapagal held a growing lead and Poe's party was claiming widespread election fraud.

Then there's the murky archipelago of Indonesia, dogged by widespread corruption, military instability and the still powerful shadow of ex-strongman Suharto, whose former party won the most seats in April's parliamentary elections.

Since Suharto was forced out in 1998, Indonesia has had a largely independent media and relatively free elections. But the ruling establishment—the political, military and business elites—has barely changed.

The process has been similarly muddled in Malaysia. It has the symbols of democracy—elections, a legislature—but few checks on a government that has been ruled, essentially by the same party since independence.

'Semi-democracy'

"We started as a very lonely other independence 47 years ago, declaring ourselves as a democracy," said Lim Kit Siang, the parliamentary opposition leader. But "Malaysia has slipped into a semi-democracy."

Whom real change has come, it is rarely seen a reproduction of the philosophy advanced by Chinese leaders, as well as Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, the Western liberal values lead to chaos and social decay. In them, only so-called "Asian values"—or, politically speaking, strong authoritarian governments—could create stable, developed societies.

It was a philosophy with plenty of opponents, among them Jose Ramos Horta, the foreign minister of East Timor, once ruled by Indonesia, now by its own freely elected government.

"The thousands of women who died in the streets of Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta, Rangoon, Beijing did not die for so-called 'Asian values'," he said recently.

COMELEC employees wear figure on a large rally board outside the Philippine International Convention Center in Manila where the official counting of votes are being held.

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'A national embarrassment'

Namfrel exec's description of May 10 polls

By Philip C. Tubeza

"It's a national embarrassment."

This was how Guillermo Luz, National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections secretary general, described the May 10 elections as Namfrel would down to quick count operations at La Salle Greenhills.

He said Indonesia and India, which have larger voting populations than the Philippines, held elections recently that ran more smoothly than what the country had on May 10.

"Generally, there were no disputes [in India]...In fact, the [Indian prime minister] conceded and stepped down immediately. And here we are, 12 days later, still counting. It's a national embarrassment," Luz said.

Around 200 million Indonesians voted in parliamentary elections on May 10 compared to around 40.5 million Filipinos who went to the polls on the same day. Indonesia had 147 million voters in its elections last April 5.

As of 1 p.m. yesterday, Namfrel's quick count had tallied results from 121,993 precincts or 38.06 percent of the country's 216,332 precincts.

Luz said he hopes Namfrel would finish tallying results from more than 60 percent of the precincts before it transfers operations to the BSW building in Mandaluyong today. It would continue the quick count operations until it stops getting election results with errors or missing information.

In partial elections, Namfrel received "clean" election results as late as 10 days after the polls.

Because its volunteers badly needed rest, there would be no updates tomorrow, but would resume on Monday. Results would be posted on the Namfrel website and e-mailed to reporters. Luz added that the quick count at the BSW building would still be open to media.

Namfrel also plans to issue a report on the problems it encountered during the polls, an outcome of the exit poll carried out on May 10, as well as recommendations.

Namfrel chair Jose Concepcion earlier said that he hoped they would be no repeat be needed in the next elections. But before this would happen, the present Comelec should be revamped.

"Heads have to roll," he said. "I mean, the present composition of the Comelec cannot carry out automation. It has been proven."

The Comelec has accredited Namfrel as its citizens' arm to guard against fraud in the slow and manual counting of votes.

But Concepcion pointed out that due to the recent blunders of the present Comelec leadership, Namfrel enjoys a higher trust rating than the election body.

Luz noted that the commission of Comelec's failed projects—like the voters' registration and the automated counting machines—should share the blame and liability for the confusion on election day.

He cited the commission for the validation project of registered voters, where the government spent around P1 billion, "for the voters' list was flawed and many people were not issued their voter's identification cards.

He also cited former Commissioner Luz Tamayo, who was in charge of the project.

"Although Tamayo has retired, she can't remain to have some accountability for this. I feel that even if you are retired, you are answerable for your work," Luz said.

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The Daily Gospel

Saturday, May 22, 2004
6th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 16:11-15
Gospel: Jn 15:26-16:4

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will give you witness on my behalf. And you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I have told you all this to stifled language, but the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in stifled language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

"Then that day comes, you will ask in my name and I will not say to you that I shall pray to the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and you believe that I came from the Father. As I came from the Father and have come into the world, so I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

Commentary

"But and tender, that your joy may be full." He did not say, "Work and earn," but rather bids that may bring completion, it is not really the joy for joy but the joy that is from beyond, but satisfaction we are seek in ourselves. C.S. Lewis titled a book Surprised by Joy. Joy comes as a surprise, not as something due.

There is all the difference in the world between giving something and having said. By giving we enclose each ourselves trying to buy our way with God, promising prayers and good works and pilgrimages, as some like God could and will consent to give us something we want. Meister Eckhart called this "trading with God and handling." "He are not changed by it; we are conducting business rather than relating to God in a personal way. In fact there is really only one person involved, oneself. Giving and receiving, on the other hand, involve us in a personal way: there is a giver and a receiver; and things like generosity and gratitude have a place. As the end of it we are changed, made more human somehow. And the more human we are, the greater our capacity for joy. Moreover we are not promised a small portion, "safe and warm, that your joy may be full."

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Mr. Palengke's advice: Let oil firms explain

By DJ Cabuenagan Jr.

"MR. PALENGKE," or Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II, has a simple advice to those asking which agencies of the warring out of opinion on how to peddle rising prices of oil and basic commodities: Let the oil companies justify their fuel price hikes and ease restrictions on basic goods to boost domestic supply.

Roxas, who met with President Macapagal-Arroyo on Wednesday, stated the key aspect of the 12-hour Bicol campaign, said the government should not act as if its hands were tied in the face of mounting inflationary pressure in the post-election period.

Roxas, who is widely expected to top the senatorial race based on the National Movement for Free Elections' quick count, said it has always been his position that the Department of Energy should take a more active role in determining whether the pump price hikes imposed by local oil refiners were justifiable.

"I don't see any reason why the DOE should depend on a private agency (Oil and Consumer Price Watch of Businessmen Ruel T. Cruz) to determine whether a price hike is justified or not," Roxas said. On its own, Roxas said, the DOE should tell whether the oil price hikes were fair based on world trade oil prices in order to protect the interest of the public.

While it might be true that world crude oil prices have been hitting record highs in recent days, Roxas said the government should not immediately accept this as sufficient basis to increase the price of their oil products immediately.

Oil companies have increased their products by an average of P1 per liter last week and they are planning to further raise their pump prices next month. The DOE is led by Energy Secretary Vince Perez—a Wall Street investment banker like Roxas—who also served as trade undersecretary under him.

On basic commodities, Roxas said the prices of cooking oil, chicken, meat, flour and dairy products have been rising not because of the fuel price hikes but because these goods were in short supply.

Roxas said the short solution on this problem was to allow more imports of these products on a temporary basis or until domestic supply has improved to meet local demand.

"I don't think we have to impose price controls at this time because easing import restrictions on selected products for a limited period should be sufficient to solve the problem of rising prices," Roxas said.

PNCC postpones highway toll hike

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC) delivered the toll adjustments at the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) due to the rare events of economic fiscal prices on toll as demands for fare hike to the public transport sector.

"We want to help alleviate the woes of the motoring and commuting public. We don't want to add to the problems," Bernard Antonio, PNCC toll-way division president, told the reporters in a phone interview.

The suspension of the new rates is indefinite, Antonio said.

The 84-km NLEX is the main link of 22 Central and Northern Luzon provinces to Metro Manila.

Based on a PNCC advisory the adjusted rates were supposed to be implemented on May 15. This was reset to May 24.

According to the advisory Class 1 vehicles (cars, jeepneys, pick-up trucks and vans) will be charged an additional 10 centavos for every kilometer. Class 2 (light trucks, tourist/school and passenger buses), 30 centavos; and Class 3 (heavy and multi-axled trucks and trailers), 35 centavos.

Should these new rates be collected, the PNCC said these are "comparatively lower" than the 1999 average pass equivalent toll per kilometer in Japan at P17.24, Singapore, P7.35, and China, P4.80; and 2000 average rates in Spain, P5.60, and Australia, P4.87.

Last February, the new developer of the NLEX, the Lopez family-owned Manila North Tollways Corp., announced a P5.44 per km increase in toll rates starting September this year.

Reports Project, PDI Central Luzon Desk

The WORLD

Edited by Lourdes B. Garcia

Chalabi cuts ties with US after raid

BAGHDAD—A leading member of the Iraqi Governing Council, Ahmad Chalabi, cut ties with the US-led coalition Thursday after a police and military raid on his house, as President George W. Bush sought to ease Iraq-Republican fears over Iraq's future.

But new photos of abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison, a report of abuses at another secret facility, and accusations—strongly denied by the US military—that 41 people celebrating a wedding party killed in a US air raid cast fresh shadows over the US occupation.

US forces were also involved in fierce clashes with militiamen loyal to radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in the Shiite holy city of Najaf.

Chalabi, once the darling of the Pentagon, said his relations with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) were "non-existent" after Iraqi police and US troops stormed his house and offices, confiscating files and computers.

Chalabi, speaking after the overnight attack on his complex in Baghdad, said the governing council would hold emergency talks Friday to discuss a response.

"I am America's best friend in Iraq; if the CPA finds it necessary to direct an armed attack against my home you can see the state of relations between the CPA and the Iraqi people," he said.

Coalition spokesperson Dan Senor dodged questions about the raids, saying they had been "Iraqi led" and that "Chalabi has worked closely with us over a number of months" to rebuild the country.

Washington has sought to distance itself from Chalabi, a secular Shiite who, in recent months, aired claims his Iraqi National Congress (INC) fed false information to the US government before the March 2003 US-led invasion.

In Washington, the Pentagon said Wednesday it had halted its monthly payments of $340,000 dollars to the INC and would seek other intelligence sources on Iraq.

A report commissioned by the US Congress said the INC had received some $335 million from the United States between March 2000 and September 2003, in part to set up regular television broadcasts beamed at the Iraqi interior.

But because of distrust between the INC and the state department, the money was never distributed to their satisfaction, since overseeing efforts to realize the goal of the money, the universal boomerang DVDer said.

Meanwhile, Bush made a rare visit to Congress to rally fellow Republicans rattled by the Iraq unrest and polls showing him in trouble ahead of the New Jersey elections.

Lawmakers emerging from the closed-door session described Bush as optimistic about his re-election bid and determined to see more democracy in Iraq.

"His determination was upbeat," said Sen. Bob Bennett, "he talked about Iraq, about getting the budget passed, and assured the Joint Chiefs[sic] are in the Iraqi."

AFP

A VIDEO grab image shows a wounded child being in bed in the hospital in Ramadi, May 20, after having had her leg amputated. The girl, Iqbal, said she was the sister of a bridegroom at a wedding claimed to have been attacked by US forces, killing around 40 people.

PRINCIPAL defendants in the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial hear the verdict at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, Germany, in this Sept. 30, 1946 file photo. US Army guards accused of abusing Iraqis inside the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq are using the same defense as many who came before them—"defense of superior orders." In just eight years, if Iraqi war crimes courts conduct trials and establish who gave them, experts in military justice say.

Paper shows new photos of Iraq prisoner abuse

WASHINGTON—Iraqi prisoners and they were sexually humiliated by female soldiers and forced to eat food from toilets in documents declassified by The Washington Post Friday that included hundreds of new photos and short video clips of torture by US military in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib jail.

The paper said the testimony of abuse contained from 13 Iraqi detainees, as well as hundreds of photographs and short digital video clips, are part of evidence gathered by Army investigators for the courts-martial in Iraq of seven US soldiers charged with abusing detainees.

In a defense department spokesperson told the daily that the descriptions of the photos and video clips seemed to match that of the graphic material shown privately to its lawmakers earlier this month.

The photographs and videos, which the daily said did not shed light on who directed the abuse at Abu Ghraib, show detainees stripping before surrounded dogs, being forced to masturbate, being hit or sexually assaulted by guards, threatened by a shotgun.

Six photographs printed in The Washington Post include details one of a naked prisoner smeared with what appeared to be excrement being forced to walk a straight line in front of a Iraqi wedding guard.

In another one, a detainee wearing an orange prison uniform is seen kneeling with his hands apparently tied behind his back as a large, black dog restrained with both hands by his handler snarls only a meter or so from his face.

A bloodied prisoner in his underwear, in another picture, stands on two boxes with his back to a wall, bending over grasping the back of his knees.

A prison guard wearing green gloves is apparently demonstrating to prisoner to the hand-size of several detainees bound hand and foot as he has before him on the floor in another photograph.

AFP

Indian PM vows help to poor, peace with Pakistan

NEW DELHI—India's new prime minister laid out his vision for the world's largest democracy on Thursday, vowing to help the poor and foster investment as well as to ease tensions with Pakistan and among Indians themselves.

"There are a lot of challenges ahead of us," Manmohan Singh said at his first news conference since President Abdul Kalam asked him on Wednesday to form a government. "The priority will be to do everything needed to reach the battle against poverty."

Singh's moderate ruminations affirmed India continuing for economic reforms, but tempered the pace. Voters this month threw out the government headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for failing to gain on the benefits of India's economic boom.

His breakthrough plan largely follows the reforms he initiated as finance minister in the early 1990s, later taken up by the BJP-led coalition ousted in an election last week.

But promising change with a human touch, Singh selected the BJP's privatization program, pledging not to sell more banks or energy giants Oil and Natural Gas Corp and GAIL India—two of the country's government's "nine gems," or cash cows.

"We need reforms and we will push forward reforms, but reforms with a human face—those reforms that provide relief, some of hope to India's common people," he said.

Singh said his Congress party-led secular coalition, expected to take power on Saturday, would also foster a pro-investment climate, which is now required according peace with nuclear rival Pakistan.

"We want food wages and means to resolve all outstanding problems that have been a source of friction and the unfortunate history of our relations with Pakistan," said Singh, keen to show a new leaf. "We should look to the future with hope."

The two sides are due to meet in Delhi next week. Singh, a native of Punjab state, which was split by the partition of India in 1947, has said his coalition would talk with separatists in Kashmir.

Reuters

Ebola-like outbreak in Sudan

KAMPALA, Uganda—World Health Organization experts are investigating an outbreak of an Ebola-like hemorrhagic fever in southern Sudan, WHO officials said Thursday.

Fifteen cases of the mystery illness have been reported near Nimule, a southern Sudanese town close to the border with northern Uganda, since May 10, said Dr. Gladys Wallen, WHO's southern representative to Uganda.

Wallen said no deaths had been reported so far.

"We are aware of the cases and we are investigating," he said.

Two WHO experts in hemorrhagic fever and outbreak response noticed in Nimule on Wednesday to investigate the illness, said Cathy Roth, a member of WHO's global alert and response team.

A preliminary investigation by WHO's Sudan country office suggested there was some sort of unusual illness and requested experts' help, said by telephone from Geneva.

The preliminary report was conducted earlier this month.

Roth was unable to give details about the number of reported cases of the illness.

"The situation is calm. There have been no new reports of cases for the last few days," she said.

Southern Sudan has been wracked by civil war since 1983, thousands of people are periodically displaced by fighting, and public health facilities are rare.

Last May, health experts identified a disease they believed 22 people in northwestern Sudan's capital Khartoum had died from.

In 2000, an Ebola outbreak killed 173 in Gulu district in northern Uganda.

The Ebola virus is spread by contact with body fluids, including sweat and saliva. Outbreaks of the disease are rare, and no one knows where the virus lives when it is not infecting humans. The disease usually kills its victims so fast that it also destroys the host for the virus.

AP

Probe of Iraq oil-for-food mess starts with UN staff

UNITED NATIONS—The head of an inquiry into alleged corruption in the $64 billion oil-for-food program in Iraq said on Thursday he was looking into allegations of misconduct by UN staff as his first priority.

Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve, also said he was trying to obtain documents from Baghdad.

He made clear that his investigation should take priority over other competing probes and that he would not release confidential documents to the press or reporters on the program.

He repeated a preliminary report within three months but said he saw his investigation could take a year.

"I don't want to promise an eight-ball report," Volcker told reporters at a briefing. "It may be appropriate to release documents but not before we have a chance to look at them."

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein last year, documents have been recovered that indicate Saddam and his Baath party paid to individuals and contracts were obtained in the nine-and-a-half billion program.

The new debacle on the food program began in December 1999, and ended with the start of the war of 1991 Gulf War sanctions on Saddam's Iraq. The program allowed Iraq to sell oil and buy humanitarian goods under UN supervision.

Independent Paul Sarbanes released by members of Iraq's governing Council show as oil vouchers that could be turned into cash paid to Beirut firms, the head of the UN program. He has vigorously denied any wrongdoing.

"As a matter of first priority, the investigation has now begun into the allegations of misconduct by UN staff," Volcker said, following on a broader examination of the UN administration of the program.

Volcker and two other financial specialists were appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan last month to lead an independent inquiry into allegations surrounding the program.

But Volcker said he had no information about whether a night time call by US soldiers and Iraqi police on the home of Iraqi politician Ahmad Chalabi was connected with reports he may have had on the oil-for-food scandal.

Chalabi, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, who is responsible for making public the alleged misdeeds, said the charges had "no foundation" on the territory of the United Nations, in the chain of the United Nations. Reuters

STABBED TO DEATH

A bundle of years ago, Australian Hagsberg Empress Elizabeth, also called "Sisi," seen in this painting by F.X. Winterhalter, was stabbed to death by a self-declared anarchist on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Various handouts, celebrations and exhibitions are planned to commemorate her death.

US women honored for taking heavy load during WWII

By Siobhan McDonagh

WASHINGTON—Still sporting pigtails, 18-year old Muriel Gilcrest became the first woman to work at the Bendix Aeronautics factory in Utah, West Jersey, during World War II.

It was hot, noisy and scary.

"Things blew up. But I got used to it," Gilcrest, 88, said at a tribute to the men's "Name the Heroes"? "I don't think I would have had the gumption to do the same today if the things I've done in my life if I hadn't had the wartime experience."

Gilcrest was one of almost a dozen female Americans at Arlington Section of Cemetery on Thursday. They shared stories of working long shifts on the home front to keep the country thriving, paving the path for future generations of women and proving that a woman could do a "man's work."

The original Rosie the Riveter, Rose Will Monroe, worked on the assembly line at Ford Motor Co. in Ypsilanti, Michigan, building B-24 and B-29 military planes. She caught the eye of Hollywood producers who were casting a "riveter" for a government film promoting the war effort. She starred as herself.

Her exposure in the film resulted in the "We Can Do It!" poster, and she came to symbolize the generation of women who entered the workplace during the war.

Anna Phalen, 82, of Elkins, West Virginia, was one of those brawny, tireless and patriotic women who traded in their sweater aprons and spatulas for tools when the men went off to war—women who stepped into assembly lines, helping to build planes, bombs and tanks.

Shortly after Phalen's husband, and lost husband, headed off to war, she wanted to do something that would help him and the country—to use her enthusiasm in a productive way.

"I just took the life out of me," she said of her newsboard hearing for the war. "I felt hopeless. I knew if I worked, it would help get him home."

Besides, she added "We were just doing what had to be done. The boys were all gone. The women had to go to work and help win the war."

Phalen was 20 when she worked on an assembly line in Akron, Ohio, building the B-29 aircraft.

When the war was over, she focused on raising her 10 children and working on the family farm. Those war years instilled in her a good work ethic.

"I really like to work. And all those years, I've worked myself to death on the farm," she said with a giggle.

Paul Robertson Co. and the Section of Park Foundation have collected more than 7,000 stories and 150 artifacts from females about it millions women went into the workforce during the war.

At Thursday's event, actress Jane Seymour joined the women for their efforts and for starting a trend that would help later generations.

One Rosie is now a senior as mind was her mother in law, who, Spanish said, even in her late 70s "would drive a horse trailer over Appalachia at night. She had a lot of gumption."

AP

US air attack in Afghanistan kills 3 civilians, says mayor

KABUL—At least three Afghan civilians were killed and several wounded in a US air attack in Afghanistan's southeastern province of Ghazni early on Friday, an official said.

The overnight raid in Jani village in the district of Ghazni town came after a patrol of US military was fired at, Ghazni's mayor, Jalil Mahmud Hamid, said. US patrols often call in close air support when they come under fire.

"We have no exact details yet, but the report we have indicates that three civilians, including two women, have been killed in the aerial bombardment and several others wounded," he said.

A US military spokesperson in Kabul said she was unaware of the incident.

According to the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), seven people were killed in the bombardment in the southeastern Ghazni and the house they were in was flattened.

Eyewitnesses told AIP that a resident in the house had opened fire on US soldiers following an ear-piercing.

Several said the US soldiers suffered no casualties, and a government team had been sent to the scene to investigate.

It was the first reported incident of civilian deaths in a US attack since January, when 21 Afghans, including four children, were killed in a US air raid on the village of Sawghtan, in the central province of Uruzgan.

In one of the most controversial incidents, 48 people died and 117 were wounded when US planes attacked a wedding party in the town of Deh Rawod, also in Uruzgan, in July 2002. The US military said a gunship had come under fire.

American forces have been blamed by anguy troops for attacking a wedding party on Wednesday near the Syrian border killing dozens of guests. The military maintains that foreign fighters died in the attack.

Forces in Iraq is fiercer. Clues it is in Afghanistan, the US military in Kabul will be keen to avoid any mistakes.

It is already facing unprecedented scrutiny of its secretive network of detention centers following fresh allegations of prisoner abuse. This week it launched a sweeping review of practices and conditions at the 40-or so jails. Reuters

A PALESTINIAN woman inspects the rubble of her house after it was demolished by Israeli bulldozers during a raid in al-Brazil in the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza Strip May 21. Reuters

Israel to continue razing homes in Gaza

RAFAH, Gaza Strip—Israeli troops pulled back from two neighborhoods in this sprawling Palestinian refugee camp Friday, leaving behind dozens of demolished and damaged homes, torn up roads and flattened cars.

Israel said its four-day military offensive, in search of arms-smuggling tunnels and militants, will continue—even though army officials said only one tunnel was discovered and it is believed many fugitives fled the camp before the army moved in.

Municipal officials said at least 45 homes were demolished and dozens more damaged in the camp since the offensive began Tuesday. Forty Palestinians were killed since then, including gunmen and eight demonstrators hit by crowd shell.

In the Brazil neighborhood, 25 homes were razed and dozen were torn up, local officials said. In many cases, the Israelis' Caterpillars just si were about 4[illegible] apparently during those wide armored vehicles moving through the narrow alleys.

Residents rummaged through the rubble, retrieving mattresses, photo albums, shoes and clothing. A pro-school bag obliterated in his surroundings, sat on the ground, scooping up sand with a broken toy bulldozer.

Israeli troops left behind leaflets in Arabic, urging residents not to give shelter to armed men "who are using your homes and are hiding inside like rats."

Bassam Othman, 55, a resident of the Brazil neighborhood, said he was hit by random fire as she lug ge he walked down the route in his home Wednesday but couldn't get medical help.

"I tried to enclose the wound with the little alcohol we had in home, but I couldn't cross over the window and call on my neighbor to call for an ambulance because the snipers were right in front of us and the bulldozer was working in the street in front of us," said Othman. Doctors said Othman's wound became infected.

Reporters were still unable Friday to get into the hardest-hit neighborhood, Tel Sultan, home to 25,000 people.

However, local officials said 38 homes were demolished there, and more damaged. Ibrahim Hafiz Abdel, speaking by telephone, said he saw smoldering and charred cars, toppled electricity poles and sewage running in the streets.

Abdel Rahim Abu Jami, 42, a resident, searched for food and water for his children. "I hardly recognized my own street," he said. "I don't think an earthquake could do what the Israeli Army did to this area."

In Tel Sultan, residents fear worse and uncertainty for part of the Israeli offensive. Doctors said relief workers were still unable to enter parts of the camp.

Israeli security officials said the offensive would continue. A key objective remains the widening of an Israeli patrol road between Rafah and the Egyptian border, which would make it more difficult for weapons smugglers to dig tunnels.

The widening of the road would require the demolition of hundreds of Palestinian homes.

Israel's vice premier, Ehud Olmert, assured US Secretary of State Colin Powell in a meeting in Washington earlier this week that the bulldozer route would not be widened, US officials said. AP

Saudi forces kill 4 militants in shootout

DUBAI—Four suspected Saudi militants and two policemen were killed in a shootout the Saudi city of Buraida on Thursday, Saudi and Arab televisions said.

Ownership known announced a group of wanted men who belong to the Al-Qaeda group in the Kingdom's area of Buraida," an interior ministry statement said on Saudi television said.

The authorities normally use the phrase "deviant group" to refer to followers of Saudi born al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. blamed for a string of suicide attacks in Saudi Arabia and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

One militant and one police men were wounded in the shootout.

Arabic television channel Al Arabiya said one of the policemen later died of his wounds.

Buraida, a town north of Riyadh, is viewed as the heartland of radical Islamists linked to bin Laden here on bringing down the US-allied Saudi monarchy.

In the latest of a series of attacks over the past year, militants killed five foreigners in an unprecedented attack on a petrochemical site on Saudi's west coast earlier this month.

There have been numerous clashes between militants and Saudi security forces, who have killed and arrested dozens and vowed more on-site raids.

Fifty people were killed in Riyadh last year in triple suicide bombings blamed on al-Qaida. Security forces have killed or arrested eight on a list of 26 top militants since December.

It was not clear if the four men were on the list. Reuters

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THE PHILIPPINE flag flies in the background as a worker starts opening up the Batasang Pambansa building where the canvassing of votes for president and vice president will be held by Congress starting Monday. Inside (right), the tally board is readied in front of the glass used for the

Poe hacks into . . .

From page A1

Santiago Tagalog also delivered more votes to Poe for the third straight day, enabling him to inch further into Mr Macapagal's lead.

The Commission on Elections yesterday said it will proclaim before the midnight witnesses of the presidential race on Sunday but it has yet to receive the certificates of canvass from 16 areas with an estimated some million voters.

"Maybe on Sunday," Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said late night. "Hopefully by then we can already make partial proclamation," he said, adding that it depends on how fast they could tabulate.

As of 8 a.m. yesterday the Comelec said only 18 CoCs have not received from areas with about seven million registered voters. Those include Quezon City and Makati, both with more than a million voters each.

Comelec said the other areas which have not submitted their CoCs are Valenzuela, Pasay, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Taguig, Pateros, Malabon, Isabela, Zamboanga City, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi and Pampagal and Abra have small voting populations.

"It will not affect (the top ten) anymore . . . I don't think that their lead could be overtaken," he said.

Regional vote

By region, the win leading area Mr Macapagal in nine out of the 17 regions. Mr Macapagal dominated seven regions including the Ilocos region where he defender Imad Noor cubed the region.

Poe was leading Mr Macapagal by 53,978 votes in Bicol, by 64,358 votes in Cagayan, by 27,699 in Western Visayas, by 78,388 in Northern Mindanao, by 10,130 votes in Southern Mindanao, by 142,794 in Eastern Mindanao, by 43,457 in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and by 23,149 in the NCR.

Mr. Macapagal, on the other hand, was leading Poe by 84,692 votes in Central Luzon, by 166,462 votes in Western Visayas, by 1,180,883 votes in Central Visayas, by 5,345 votes in Eastern Visayas, by 55,763 votes in Caraga, by 9,804 votes in the Cordillera Autonomous Region and by 47,233 in the overseas votes.

Roco took the third Region with 29,849 votes, followed by Mr. Macapagal with 336,537 votes and Poe with 282,880 votes.

Third place in the Gambol count was Iloilo Lanao with 1,960,150 votes, followed by Imee with 1,195,230 votes, and Sen. Edu Manzano with 1,091,216 votes.

VP race

In the vice presidential race, Loren Legarda also cut the lead of Independent Sen. Noli de Castro to only 879,860 from 767,758 the day before. De Castro got 8,445,661 votes as against Legarda's 7,736,781.

De Castro took the lead in 10 out of 17 regions, including the CR.

As Gambol's automated tally Mar Roxas remained the undisputed leader with 10,050,072 votes, followed by former Estrella with 8,617,641 votes, and Aquilino Pimentel with 7,420,836 votes.

There was no change in the watching group except for the staff and security spot which saw administration candidates Pit Juliano Cayetano and Miriam Defensor-Santiago changing places. Santiago regained the sixth spot from Cayetano who slides to seventh.

The count was still 7-1 in favor of the administration coalition 8-4.

Jamby Madrigal was still third, Richard Gordon, fourth; Alfredo Lim, eighth; and Gilbert Teodoro, Jose Pepe Diokno, 10th; Dagupy Tatad, 11th; and Makoki Binay, 12th.

Within striking distance of the Magic 12 were Robert Barbers, Ernesto Maceda and John Osmeña.

Comelec tally

At Comelec's official count based on 131 out of 170 CoCs, Roxas was leading with Estrella in second place and Pimentel in third place with A,51 8,220. Madrigal was in fourth position.

Santiago was fifth; Gordon, sixth; Guingona, seventh place; Erap, Tatad and Alfredo Lim occupied the eighth to 10th places. Lim kept the 10th to 11th place and Estrada at 12th place.

Party-list

In the party-list elections, Bayan Muna continued to hold on to its lead with 357,990 votes or 10.33 percent of total votes cast.

The progressive group remained within the top 2 percent mark.

Three include Akbayan, which is in third place with 308,904 or 8.16 percent, Gabriela with 197,040 or 5.68 percent. Buhay Hayang Mangagawa with 157,942 or 2.79 percent and Anakpawis with 140,461 or 4.05 percent.

Apec continued to hold on to its lead with 357,990 votes or 10.33 percent of total votes cast.

The progressive groups

Castañares stakes RP title vs No. 2 Caballes

PEQUEPINO junior welterweight champions Sheila Castañares defends his title for the third time tonight against No. 2 World Caballes in a 12-round showcase at the Mandaue City Sports and Cultural Complex.

Castañares will risk his 11-2-1 (9 KOs) slate against the dangerous Caballes of Mandaluyong City.

Castañares weighed in at 140 lb, while Caballes was a shade below at 139.75 during the official weigh-in yesterday supervised by Cebu Mayor Jonas Cortes and Boxing Commissioner Rodolfo Mendoza.

Two more championship battles featuring the "triple champ-contender" and undefeated by unbeaten prospects Sammy Gello-ani.

Rocky Ramos of the AGA Stable of Cebu makes his first title credit against Philippine Boxing Federation middle champ Philip Pacoy of Davao City over 10 rounds.

RP No. 1 middle Dennis Siares battles Joseph Vilson of Davao City for the vacant PBF junior lightweight crown.

Ireneo L. Legaspi/Jr., contributor

3 jungolf streaks end; Sotto sparkles

THE END? Ai Inoking savored the first time in a long, long time to see much to beat for Rose Jamilla (right), who signs her score. The girl who failed her streak, Abby Arenado (left), waits for her turn.

THREE winning streaks came to a halt as Tristan Asinido, Debbie de Villa and Abby Arenado pulled off big victories in their respective divisions on Thursday in the Samsung Philippine Junior Golf Tour at the Legends course of the Manila Southwoods.

Asinido halted the three-leg skein of Jerson Mesamiguel to boys' Class A with a closing round par 72, despite the howling winds, and won by 10 stroke over Lawrence Segnalo with a 218 total. Mesamiguel settled for fourth.

De Villa pulled an even bigger feat when she denied the Segundo a fourth straight family sweep in the Teen ladies' by the Interscholastic Container Terminal Services Inc. and Philippine Airlines.

Debbie saved her best for last, posting a 73 for 228 to stop the remarkable unbeaten Crystal Nash Segnalo by seven strokes in girls' Class B. Debbie's older sister Lizzel (83-2016) topped girls' Class A by two for a family double.

It was Arenado who made the biggest impact as she ended the six-leg domination of Jamilla Baera. Arenado shot a 80-169 for a three-shot victory in the tournament also supported by Gold Dragon, Unilever and Coleado.

While the big winning runs ended, Pauline Soto continued her own with her 77-226. It was the fourth straight victory of the daughter of TV host Vic Sotto.

Miles Yee and Miguel Tabuena also scored clear wins in boys' Class B and Class C, respectively.

Joining them in the winners' circle were Viktor Sagard, Cristina Permentera, Gil Ramos, Princess Sagarad and Rupert Gerogana.

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Montaña, Blu Star tackle tough rivals

From page A4

The quarterfinal survivors advance to the semifinals against league leaders Pan Montaña Mary and Patricia Perez, who earlier advanced outright by finishing 1-2 in the eliminations.

For its service, Blu Star and Montaña have lost their quarterfinal foe twice. One has stolen heirlooms off the tournament.

Hapee and Toyota enjoy the luxury of the twice-to-beat edge in the quarters after clinching the third and fourth seed at the end of the eliminations.

The Jewels arranged a showdown with the Knights via an 80-50 rout of Sandoz 2.0Z in Thursday's do-or-die playoffs, while Blu Star handed Lee Hyun-Jeeners a shocking 61-58 defeat.

Despite the big, upside-boosting win, Montaña coach Robert Sloan is aware of Toyota, which will be playing to its home turf. Irma Hurly

Sports stars' inspiring stories told at exhibit

THE TOP 10 teams in the Adidas Impossible is Nothing Challenge are on exhibit at the South Court, Power Plant Mall, until tomorrow.

The exhibit features stories of ordinary people achieving extraordinary feats in sports. It also includes special guests who are Olympic gold medalists Lydia de Vega and soccer star Chanel Rodriguez.

Contest winners will be announced.

The grand prize is a trip for two to NBA playoff game featuring Minnesota's Kevin Garnett.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Presumptuous

EDITORIAL

THERE is no truth to the rumor that Fil-American Jasmine Trias refused to accept her loss in "American Idol" because she did not know whom to concede to. (The contest is down to two finalists.) Or because, despite her flock of devout believers (over five million calls were made from Hawaii last week, more than twice that state's population), she still lost the vote in the popularity-based talent show this week.

Sounds familiar? If even a pop-cultural phenomenon like "American Idol" can give birth to politically inspired jokes, blame the prolonged election count. Like our Christmas season, our post-election process, from counting to proclamation, must surely be the longest in the world.

This sorry last has not stopped at least three of the five presidential candidates from claiming victory.

We have already criticized Eddie Villanueva, the spiritual leader of the Jesus is Lord Movement, for claiming that he was "winning" some 10 million votes—a claim made at a time when the count was barely under way. He has since toned down his rhetoric, now insisting only on understanding "what truly happened during the elections."

Three days after the election, we also took President Macapagal-Arroyo to task for her presumptuousness to subtly laying claim to the election. But her unctuous thank you's to the religious blocs she had courted have paled in comparison to the victory-claiming stunts she and her executive secretary, Alberto Romulo, have since pulled.

Her order to her Cabinet secretaries to tender their courtesy resignations, and Romulo's breezy remark that he expected the President to win the election by a "majority" of two or three million votes, signal the administration's belief that the President won the count.

Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye has tried to minimize the damage these acts of presumptuousness have wrought, but he faces a difficult task.

For the exact same reason, however, we must also criticize Fernando Poe Jr.'s premature, presumptuous claim of victory.

Days after the opposition Koalisyon ng Maglalakbayang Pilipino created a furor over the alleged presence of Fire Greenhouse Jose Miguel Arroyo in various parts of Mindanao (since denied), Poe visited the same places. But instead of conspiracy theories about vote-buying schemes, this time the opposition candidate's scriptwriters gave us a victory statement.

"We won," Poe told reporters in Zamboanga City.

Then he added: "We know what they (presumably the administration) are doing. We are ahead by a wide margin against (Macapagal) Arroyo based on the quick count of television network ABC-5, but the figures coming from other rallies are different. I would like you to know that the presidency is no longer at stake here, but it is the people's will that is now at stake."

Rather disingenuously, Poe forgot to mention that the quick count he was referring to was based on the KNP's own People's Action and Unity Center, based at the Makati Coliseum. (Even more disingenuously, the KNP count does not provide a breakdown of the numbers—a sin the opposition accuses the Comelec-accredited National Movement for Free Elections, which operates the only official quick count, of committing.)

The many spokespersons of the KNP including newly inducted Rep. Francis Escudero, Sen. Vicente Sotto and ex-Rep. Miguel Romero, have since tried to downplay Poe's remarks. The low-key Escudero has been most effective; the combative Romero, the least persuasive. But essentially their defense is based on drawing the contrast of Poe's statement: that it was made to rally his troops, that he knew only the Comelec and Congress can proclaim a president.

The feckless chair of the Commission on Elections, Benjamin Abalos, has also weighed in, saying Poe had not committed an election offense by prematurely claiming victory. Abalos even tried to make light of the whole thing by bringing in the specter of a bigwig: the ridiculous Iloilo fill, in whose name Abalos' tenure at the election agency will forever be linked.

But like the President's own courtesy-resignation stunt, Poe's categorical statement in Zamboanga City was no laughing matter. It was presumptuous, and must not go unchallenged.

Protected predators

SEPARATE OPINION

Raganil A. Cruz

I DON'T know what gives Cebu Pacific and Air Philippines such unmitigated arrogance as to be able so consistently oppress the residents of Mercedes and surrounding municipalities without responsibility or accountability.

The noise of their airplanes as they fly directly over our communities has endured in over the years without letup. We have protested their careless noise pollution of our environment, but to no avail. Their planes have not only not abated but in fact have even escalated.

Ask sought relief from the Aquino administration but did not get it. President Ramos could have helped us but he did less even if General Almonte is from our village. The Estrada regime was also too busy to assist us and so too was La Gloria, who was pre-occupied with her campaign.

After reading one of my many articles in this column about our problem, Sen. Loren Legarda arranged a meeting between me and Commodore Ong of the Air Transportation Office. Ong then had to bring the Executive of his enforcement unit and gave short shrift to my complaint. I got him in his place and he ceased to be domineering. He promised to see what he could do, but the way only operations.

Meeting our pleas, the committee on public services and environment chaired by Sen. Joker P. Arroyo called Ong to hear his side. The ATO chief also promised to help us, we have reported to the committee that he had entered into an agreement with the two airlines for the solution of our problem.

Under that agreement, both airlines would limit their flights over our community and only at affected areas in between 10 o'clock in the morning and 2 o'clock in the afternoon. None of their airplanes would fly over our community outside of that 4-hour period in deference to the right of repose and good health of the residents of the affected area.

That means that their airplanes would not awaken us during the early morning hours nor would they disturb our evening meal or the prelude to our rest beginning at late afternoon, through the entire night, and until late morning of the next day.

There were no other solutions suggested to the airlines, to wit, transfer of their operations to the International airport like the Philippine Airlines and installation of loud-noise monitors on the noise of their airplanes. The airlines rejected the idea. Cebu Pacific had built-bland 6 of its 12 DC-9s while Air Philippines has not complied at all.

We accepted the agreement because we felt that the airlines had to make a living too and earn some profit. But as conciliatory as we were, the airlines have been less responsible of the obligations they had willingly assumed, either. They have been treating the voluntary agreement with insolent bad faith if not, indeed, outright impudence.

After a show of compliance for some time, the airlines are back to their former impertinent flight schedules. We are being harassed again. Some of their planes fly as early as 3 o'clock in the morning or through the sleep of many of our residents, including the children. There are also flights after the 5 o'clock deadline that are again traveling low over village with the old height limits.

Senior politicians is one of the blights on a healthy and exotic environment. The roar of the airplanes from Cebu Pacific and Air Philippines interrupts our conversations and prevents full reception of radio and television shows and announcements. Worse, its volume is way above normal levels and has impaired the hearing of many of our residents, including the children.

Sky has been replaced by another military man as head of the MTC Gen. Alfa Lund, there is also ignoring the agreement entered into by his office. It is again conducting day-to-day flights over our residential area, despite our complaint for the protection of our health and comfort, are no match against the permissions of Cebu Pacific and Air Philippines.

We are hereby reporting to Senator Arroyo that the petition made by the ATO to his committee is now being kept. The service letter continues to fly their airplanes during the prohibited period in the area causing the tensions of the people of Mercedes and other places not only in Pateros but also San Juan and Pasig City.

Sen. Manuel Villar, who resides in San Pedro, has filed a bill to regulate the noise of airplanes take-offs, but it has yet to be considered by the Senate. Rep. Eduardo Gutierrez of Dasmariñas City has filed a resolution for the investigation of the airplane noise and vulnerability in crash-planting against Pioneer Rep. Rodel Zabat did the same during his three-term incumbency but absolutely nothing happened either.

Meanwhile we continue to be plagued by the terrible noise pollution of AB Philippines and Cebu Pacific, which apparently enjoy the protection and patronage of the government for reasons we can only suspect.

Reliability of exit polls

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

CAN polls be manipulated? Certainly. Which is why the public should be leery about "polls" conducted by fly-by-night or johnny-come-lately groups, which open their doors on weekends and use dubious statistical methods, whether deliberately or out of ignorance, and which is why the public can be confident in survey research organizations like Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations—which have study records to bring to your eyes and say that the people whose professional credentials are impressive and whose professional reputations are spotless—and which both are, in their data gathering, a member brandish organizations. The "trends, thus bad few, if any points in the national.

Exit polls in the Philippines were first tested in 1992, in the municipal races in Manila, Quezon City and Makati, and in the bitterness of when Comelec Chair Christian Monsod, who was approached by the JWS. Knowing that there were numerous cases of developed countries, and knowing the counting problems in the Philippines, he felt that exit polls would provide an independent, scientific check on election results. Subsequent Comelec leaderships continued to have felt threatened by exit polls, and tried to prohibit their use. The Supreme Court, thankfully, reversed the Comelec.

How have these exit polls performed? I looked at their results over the years, for the 1992 presidential survey, for the 1995 and 2001 senatorial elections, and for the 1998 presidential and senatorial elections. Which one plus my recollection, the exit polls, whose results come within a day after the elections, pretty accurately what the official counts would disclose one to four weeks later. The exceptions was the 1995 senatorial elections: the exit poll results showed that Peter Tanjo in 15th to 17th place (vying with former Talisman), while the official results had Tanjo entering the winners' circle. Agabito Pimentel and Sanggang Bayan, in the same race, were in 8th to 10th place in the exit polls, but they ended up in 13th and 16th place, respectively, in the official Comelec count. If we go by the exit polls, it was statistically improbable, given the percentages and the margin of votes, for that to have happened. Interestingly, Pimentel filed a suit against Tanjo, while Pimentel was in the Senate. Electoral Tribunal, and while recently was dismissed by the Supreme Court for missing other things, being short and undecided.

How are exit polls conducted? For the past 4 elections, Mercy Kraft's Trends conducted the exit surveys, supervisors under its belt and regular elections all the exit polls undertaken that far. Related 840 interviewers all over the Philippines on election day from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. (on the principle that every voter must have an equal chance to be chosen), from the heavily populated to the alternate towns). They went to the homes of the voters instead of going it at the polling place, for two reasons: one is that by law no one can enter within 50 meters of a polling place, and the other is that, given current political practices, there are limits to any who their professional acts, of any many points in life, particularly when local political leaders are around.

Again, adjusting to the culture, the choices of the respondents were given by "owner" but, but—the respondents filled up a "ballot" and placed it in a "ballot box," so the interviewers had no way of knowing their vote. So they viewers was allowed to undertake more than 10 interviews, obviously to ensure that if an interviewer was by some reasons cannot submitted, and to some extent distance was not caught, the effect would be minimal.

Monitoring the interviewers were a team of 280 supervisors and "back-checkers" whose role was to review an interviewer's steps at random to check whether indeed interviews had taken place. In addition to these, the SWS also fielded 14 of its own supervisors to further check the monitoring systems via check on the checkers. If you ask me, for the SWS, two SWS supervisors supervised 10 supervisors who, in turn, supervised, handpicked the work of 134 interviewers.

Mind runs a very tight ship. No wonder here is the second largest number and survey research firm in the country and the largest among those who do customs-tailored projects for the client's needs. Trends has the largest field organization, because it does not believe in subcontracting field work and prefers to train its own staff. Thus, it has 1,000 interviewers, assuming his permanent, every one of whom is needed. Last year, it undertook 400 surveys with sample sizes ranging from 500 to 20,000. One does not get that kind of business unless one has a reputation for competence and trustworthiness.

Why is the chance so remote that confronted us last interviewers (who decides at just fill up the answers herself) can get away with it? Mind's answer: In the events that the falsified is not caught in the field (in the NCR, there was almost one supervisor for every two interviewers), a suspicious pattern will likely emerge when the interviewer's results are cross-tabulated against those of other interviewers. With such long experience, Mind can almost "smell" an anomaly. When such an interviewer is caught, either the results are discarded, or if it is possible, Mind conducts another survey—at its own expense.

Comparing exit and count would with due of the official counters, can one wonder why I still place my confidence in Mind's results in case of a discrepancy?

Wanted: statesmen

POLITICAL TIDBITS

BeTeodz
Olivarez-Cavanna

* * *

Dillon, who will preside over the joint sessions, said time out of the 17th regular EDCs to be ratified and by the presidents and cities, 149 are now in line are currently and the rest expected to be ratified until this weekend. In keeping of the report about Manila EDCs allegedly bound to the Federal premises, stating that the two are now in parallel round the clock. Drilon said he foresees signed in a bicameral meeting yesterday that the EDCs will be submitted and to the House on Tuesday morning, and at 2 p.m. Congress will move to joint session to approve the rules of session and conduct to consider related matters. He foresees each house will be ready to hold daily from Monday to Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., until the proclamation is finished. "We want to show our people we are ready to expedite the task, but without railroading it or railing it," he said.

* * *

As the rules provide, a joint congressional committee will be created for the purpose of canvassing the votes cast in the presidential election on members from the Senate and seven from the House to be appointed by their respective chiefs. The 14 members may sit en banc or in two divisions of seven each. In the event the chamber's panel will consist of four members from the majority and three from the minority. Drilon will designate Senate Majority Leader Francisco S. Tatad as head of the Senate panel while De Venecia will name Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez as House panel chief. De Venecia wants to include, among others, Aurora Rep. Sonia Angara-Castillo to represent the LDP-KBP wing and Deputy Speaker Raphael Bindoy and Bohol Rep. Eladio Jaime to represent the Nacionalista Party-Lakas wing.

* * *

Under the rules, the joint committee will submit a committee report to the two chambers after the canvass. There the two houses will vote in plenary but vote separately on it. After that comes the big event: the proclamation of the presidential and vice presidential winners.

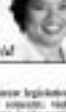
The paper the solution by Congress looks unsound, but it could be filled with land mines. Definitely it will require the highest statesmanship from all the members to carry out the task.

Drilon cautioned against the 11 of Rule VIII on "Joint Committee" issues that this committee shall, "upon determination of the authenticity and due execution" of the COCs, preliminarily canvass the returns for the highest number of votes cast for any office." Drilon stated, "because while the Supreme Court has defined what can and do under that phrase, and the evidentiary that the COC has relied appeared "in face value" of genuine authentic, and some lawyers say this might refer to the board canvass. For instance, some avid opinion every COC while others might, were call for a look at the returns from the precinct level, which would make it impossible to conduct the canvass in a timely manner. Also under the rules, the lawyer of the objecting party is given five minutes to state his case, and beyond that he has to put the protest in a memorandum and file within the 5PC days after the last scheduled session as set in. (Recall that Senator Defensor Santiago's protest against Fidel Ramos in 1992 was overturned by her subsequent candidacy for the Senate.)

* * *

The objective of these meanings point are shown in to finish the COC tabulation in time the elected president and vice president can be proclaimed well ahead of the mandated time for their oath-taking, which is June 30. Drilon hopes everything will be finished in two weeks or so. He is afraid that pointing off the precincts could create a vacuum in leadership and heighten the possibility flaging the restructure in Congress.

Protection under the law



AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

* * *

ON THE LEGISLATIVE front, so much progress has been made to advance women's rights in this country. Among the many landmark laws passed recently are the Gabriela in Nation Building Act that recognizes and promotes women's full participation in national development; the Girls' Scouts' Special Law that penalizes gender-based discrimination in the hiring, promotion and training of women; and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law that recognizes sexual harassment as a crime and establishes a procedure for investigating and bringing to court harassers; the Responsible Anti-Rape Law that re-classifies rape as a public crime; the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Law against Trafficking of Women and Children, that in effect corrects the old presumption in law that the only criminal in prostitution is the woman and not the man who engages in violence against women and their Children that recognizes violence as a crime; and, broadens the definition of "violence" and prescribes penalties previously out of reach of battered women and abused children.

With the passage of each of these laws, women and women's groups were duly applauded and triumphant. But they were always subjected to the caveat that the real test of the success of the law rests is that the inequalities between men and women in the Philippines are not only due to the limitations or injustices of our laws but due to outdated sociocultural factors.

Now that the Responsible Anti-Rape Law was passed, some women's groups issued a statement declaring that the law "will not bring an end to rape." Of course, they were right. If anything, it will only bring to the fore the fact that rape is far more widespread than we can imagine. But no one, least of all the legislators who struggled to guide the bill through the legislative labyrinth and the women's organizations that mustered a public campaign for its passage, were ever so naive as to believe that the passage of a law would mean no man would ever rape a woman again. But at least it will now be easier to prosecute rape, rape-torturer, and to have a woman who was raped by her husband against her wishes will no longer feel like she is being "raped all over again" by the courts.

* * *

But the law is useful for something at least: it provides relief to victims who otherwise find scant protections from both the abuses until those wrongdoers are thrown behind bars.

One of the outstanding features of the "VAWC Law" (for Violence against Women and their Children) is the creation of the "Temporary Protection Order" that a court or even a barangay captain can issue against a person the victim in a case of domestic violence even while the case is still being heard. Given that the new law's implementing rules and regulations are still being made, many thought it would take months before the TPO could be issued. But apparently some courageous judges have taken the law's passage as a signal that they can now place matters of violence against women and children on the front burner of their concerns. One such judge is Presiding Judge Antonio Eduardo B. Nachura of Branch 46 of the Manila Regional Trial Court, who issued the first TPO under the new law even as the guide still be awaited is being drawn-up.

In Cebu, I am told, a local judge issued a TPO in the case of a woman from Liloan (whose name and age I did not catch) who had been battered by her husband and her children. The woman was reportedly assisted by women lawyers in that province under the women lawyers' group PIRA.

* * *

In MANILA, Judge Jolanta Ikdarisan granted a TPO (effective for 30 days) last May 4, and is set to hear the petition for a permanent protection order on May 24, in the case of frustrated parricide against Rolito Manel filed by his wife Belinda Herrera-Manel.

Readers may remember the case, which involves a couple from prominent and wealthy families, in which Melissa claims that her husband, at the height of a violent outburst, shot her in the abdomen with a gun.

Quoting from of Melissa's petition, the judge ordered that: Bobbie be prohibited from "threatening to commit or committing" any of the acts mentioned in the petition, which include physical abuse in the law; and from "harassing, annoying, contacting or otherwise communicating" with the victim directly or indirectly. He was also directed to stay away from Melissa, her immediate family and household members as well as from her residence, their parish church or anywhere she (Melissa might go to go. Bobbie was also ordered to surrender to the Manila police any firearm in his possession.

* * *

RIGHT desperate, the court granted Melissa custody of their young children and ordered Bobbie to support her and the children, shelling out P20,000 monthly. The judge also granted Melissa the use of Bobbie's motor vehicle and possession of the jewelry and other personal effects of Melissa and the children, which means continuing to give the Melissa's medicaments and supporting needs.

Also granted to Melissa is the use of the safety deposit box of Bobbie from being or opening a firearm or deadly weapons and ordering him to surrender his firearms to the court "for proper disposition," including the revocation of license/firearm permit under his name and that of his bodyguards.

He was also ordered to post a P10-million bond.

So you see, the law may not always provide all the answers, but at least it assists fairness in a country of coup-spoon rumbles.

By the sweat of their brows

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Ricardo L. Harper

* * *

When abaca was harvested, it was quite the season when men and women would, standing gracing big bundles of fiber for days in lanings. Interested to as to know, hence the name of the island Leyte, their economy (which) that they used as well to include palay.

They applied themselves to other industries like making mats, bags, hats, etc., prepared the ropes, and other materials for the making of other planes. They worked in rehearsal because, needed to join and chickens, manned the fields, etc. If they had children, they came to a time finish which they were very young, they helped chew patience detailing the keys to the care and passion of fowls animals and the girls in the domestic, housekeeping, laundry and the care of the younger siblings.

Both boys and girls pounded the rice and cooked meals. When they grew older, they were a great help to their parents when to a great extent they helped and obeyed.

Cebu from a very young age displayed wisdom and intelligence. They were no matters to buy or sell goods, while their mothers were busy attending their brothers prepared tobacco, buyo and areca nuts. The buyo were not considered as delicacies and painstaking as the girls and most men grew up as buyakeros.

The laziness of the native has been exaggerated. The lack of public works and the scarcity of minimum wage jobs contributed in great part to the idleness of the Filipino. In 1900 there were already complaints about the deficiency in labor necessary for agriculture, as it's not like this is something new. What we should ask is why the provinces have remained underdeveloped in their liquid deposits that massive path football? And if it the fields they were not productive, it could be attributed to the lack of kindness for the agricultural classes we attach they' dedicated themselves out of necessity. Due to decrease the payback was to subsidize.)

The requirement of those belonging to the domestic class was accented as in European countries. It was also possible to compare the advantages they acquired favorably with that of other civilized countries. Governors that the locals may have to be taught to read and write. It was not like they didn't have other schools in Europe and the United States. Minus the education they offered abroad was different, which is doubtful.)

Notwithstanding his shortcomings, the Filipino had to work in his wonders, an extraordinary imagination and a humility that was amazing. He was satisfied by a few thalids of rice and fish, yet still dared an 8, vs. 24-hour day, calmly tolerated displaying feelings or weariness.

As a rule, Filipinos were eager to try something new and they did not lack ardor in facing the task. Of course at the era. They were excellent sailors and adept at handling vessels and crafts, a skill they evolved. Instinctive sense that was unsurpassed by laymen, lakes and navigation that astounded swordsmen and which they frequented. They were early spacing with their food, which consisted of a little fish or meat, a few vegetables and added some vegetables and salted fish, assuming characters blessed if they could add a small piece of meat to their meal.

* * *

Games of chance, tuntiras and raffles held a great attraction and were not diversions but a means of livelihood or a chance to escape poverty.

(Archipelago Filipino 1900, colección de datos por algunos padres Jesuitas.)

Dialogue on faith

Whoever delivers publicly that he belongs to me, the Son of Man will do the same for him before the angels of God. —Luke 12:8

DSE dog I was invited to Steve Casullian's home. Over lunch, we talked about her recent trip to India. She showed me some photographs of the country and some of the missionaries who joined her on that trip. She told me in particular about a Spanish girl in their group who was in tragedy.

"She had no faith at all," Steve Casullian said. "But after being here just a few days, she changed — and was very grateful for her Named life."

The pictures accompanied not much about the Philippines. The sights looked the same: children with rumbles, tattered faces, homes hastily cobbled with rubber tires on the rooftops. I could almost smell the scenes.

"Oh, but look at those!" Steve Catalina said. "There are endings!" I remembered about the time he gave children in the province Philippine newer had so hungry even in the face of adversity and trial. Laughter is our coping mechanism, our way out of the difficulties of daily life. We laugh at the inadequacy of our governments. We laugh at the pretentiousness of the rich. We laughter the weather. We laugh at being poor. We laugh at everything we do. We laugh for no reason at all.

I was proud that I had a gesture of understanding of things. I came prepared with my philosophy on life and my analysis of humanity. I was ready to answer every question Steve Casullian threw at me. But the truth is, I am just a spectator; a mere observer of things. I look at everything from a safe angle but never seem to see more important matters, like my own life.

"There was another missionary who was ashamed to share her faith," Steve Casullian continued. She started a ball's eye. That missionary was just like me. I believe in God but many are times when I refuse to talk about my faith. For me, there are just many people who already talk about their faith but never really mean what they say. How many times have we prayed without conviction? I asked myself, how people go to Heaven with an empty conscience.

"Perhaps we just how we don't have the authority to share our faith," I told him. "How can we be trustworthy when people don't believe in what we say?"

This time, I looked for sense and few pieces of my own life. I didn't live my life perfectly. I made a lot of mistakes. In my young age, I have gone through a lot of unfortunates. I am also imperfect. I would like a shelter to be worthy of somebody. I didn't think I had the right to talk about my faith when I was not walking the talk. I thought I was not ready.

Steve Catalina nuanced herself. When she came back she showed me another photograph of a Filipina.

"That's Maria," she told me. "We did some thinking in the Philippines for a group like ours. She was my favorite. But she died in a car accident."

I could see the pain in her face. "She was a woman of the world," Steve Catalina continued. "She lived her life without limits. She made a lot of mistakes. She loved and lost." I have some parallels with this woman.

"I, too, was standard tainted that made me proud of her," she said. "She was a prostitute before her faith, she helped somehow others. Ah, when she died, a lot of people came up to me and said, it wasn't for her, their lives would not have changed."

Steve Catalina's eyes glistened as she talked. "The Holy Spirit finds some ways to spread the faith," she said. "Before, it was the religious who led people to evangelists, but now it's the youth."

The youth? But how? How can we evangelize people when we lack experience? We only have a little understanding of life and we are expected to change the world? I can barely comprehend why I write my own feminist column, would be there is no need for it. But I don't like to speak in front of crowds, thus talking in broken of people.

And yet, how exactly did Jesus reveal himself? Did he choose the best? No, for those blockers, a tax collector who had an immediate fear for money (Nicodemus Paul, a non-believer who crucified the Christ), and Peter, a simple fisherman. Jesus didn't choose saints. He chose sinners. He chose simple people like us.

What did Jesus see in them? When they started to spread the word, they didn't believe in themselves. They had doubts. Then, they were just sinners, and yet Jesus chose them and told his Church. It was their potential to transform themselves and inspire their shortcomings that made them wise and faithful to God. Maybe that was when Jesus saw in them.

I said goodbye to Steve Catalina with this thought still hanging in the air. On my way out, there were stacks of books on the table. Among them was the red solid one. "Hey, that is the church newsletter! But you shouldn't be interested. It might be a little boring for you."

I don't know what made me say it, but these saddened feelings answered as somehow an answer for the newsletter. "Maybe I can write a story for you," I joked. I promised to send my article the following week.

But I didn't. On weeks, I couldn't bring myself to write it. I had more important things to do. But when God is at work, he chooses ordinary people to be his instruments. Sometimes when you least expect it. He guides you to do his work.

For one day I found myself in front of my computer and beginning to write: "One day, I was invited to Steve Catalina's home..."

* * *

Tuesday Gutierrez, 26, is a copywriter who is now teaching and studying in Spain.

YOUNG BLOOD

Tuesday Gutierrez

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? Be welcome your thoughts and letters — e-mail comments@inq.com.ph and below. — Ed.

THEY SAID

Mark of dishonor

"By Philippine standards, nobody is elected homicide anywhere in the country. That's the truth."

—former Isko City Gov. Rodolfo Antolin on the likelihood that slain Mindanao mayor Cesar Climaco died in a hit-and-run accident

Rights violator

"It's ironic how the country which calls itself the bastion of democracy and human rights can easily violate human rights."

—Prof. Jose Ma. Lacaba, commenting on the decision by the United States Supreme Court to allow the detention of alleged Taliban suspects at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base by the United States War Crimes Tribunal for Human Rights

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RP needs pols like Gandhi

IN THE RECENTLY concluded national elections in India, Sonia Gandhi's Congress Party and allies overwhelmingly defeated the Hindu Nationalist Party led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his Democratic National Alliance.

Being the head of the party, Gandhi was expected to become prime minister and lead a coalition government dependent on the outside support of two communist parties.

But unexpectedly she humbly declined to take the post—a decision, according to her, dictated upon by her inner voice and conscience. She said it was never her aim to be prime minister, for the ultimate goal was to provide India with a secular government that is strong and stable.

Despite the many pleas and vows a resolution passed by the new Congress Party lawmakers, she remained steadfast to her decision.

I don't know how a politician would shun the ardent of Gandhi. As an ordinary observer, I just wish we had more politicians like Gandhi in our country.

I believe that the real measure of politics is service to the people, in other words, serving the public interest, not oneself.

—RENE VILLA
rbsv@yahoo.com

LETTERS

Could a 'Taguba' survive in the AFP?

THE DAILY Inquirer headline of the Philippines would like to commend Filipino-born Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba of the United States Army for his objective investigation and courageous account of the torture and ill-treatment of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers. For this, he is worthy to be called an officer and a gentleman. He should be emulated by many of our military and police officers.

The INQR reads the crimes and ill-treatment of some 30 political prisoners in Mati, Davao; of Noor Rahadan in Cotabato; arrogance, and even the double-talk dispread by CIDG (Criminal investigation and Detection Group) personnel in Davao—all capital of torture. From January 2004 to March 31, 2004, we have documented torture cases involving 106 victims. Nos nos has been subjected to a "Tagaba-like" arrogance. Some of the prisoners in our country have been subjected to electrocution, strangulation, suffocation by plastic, and beatings—to death. Testimonies of injured live. Could so, "Success Tagaba" have served as survivors from by torture?

Upholding human rights cases has nonvigilants any resolutions, more, deserving human rights violations, as what happened in Abu Ghraib, Baghdad with prisoners of war and detainees. Let us not be numb nation and not say no to torture anymore.

—REX M. DE ROSA,
member, Board of Directors,
Bukidnon Association
of the Philippines
61 St. Mary Street, Cubao, QC

In defense of Namfrel

IT'S bad enough that rival political parties are hurling accusations of electoral fraud against each other, but I think they are going too far in blaming the National Movement for Free Elections, a non-partisan organization, for allegedly conducting dagdag-bawas. Having been a Namfrel volunteer for the past three elections, I am offended to hear candidates—those juggling behind in the quick count—accuse the organization of election fraud without evidence to support their claims. I was especially disgusted upon learning that flyers of anonymous origin were distributed at the Namfrel headquarters, alleging that the organization was manipulating election results and was engaged in swindling.

While Namfrel's accuracy may not be perfect, the history of the organization shows it to be fully committed to democracy and the electoral process. Without an independent body to make a quick count, all the more will the door be open to massive cheating and fraud. The public only knows too well that without the quick count, the more the Commission on Elections could become doubtful, especially now that the Comelec's credibility and competence are in question.

Lastly, I would like to point out that most of Namfrel's volunteers are idealistic students, members of civil society and religious groups, rendering service without compensation and sacrificing their time to ensure that the electoral process is safeguarded. Unlike some of the politicians waving Namfrel, these people will never consider disowning the electoral process by manipulating the results.

To accuse Namfrel of doing so not only ignores its commitment, time and efforts toward honest elections, it also insults the volunteers who make up the organization. I wonder whether those making the allegations can face these volunteers and accuse them that they are involved in dishonest practices. Before giving public with their claims, they should have presented evidence. There is no room for mere allegations, but I sincerely doubt that they can.

—CESAR A.S. ALEJO,
El Shaqqarha St.,
Valle Verde 1, Pasig City

Madly in love with the Philippines

BRIAN Jasmine David pointed out that Antonio Tinio has done for the Filipino community a service that no visiting Filipino dignitary, official, or nationalistic leader has been able to do—that is, to make the Filipinos and diverse cloud matter of Filipinos living in the United States.

I was prepared for her not to write if only to silence the naysayers, even more shockingly, fellow Filipinos. There is no question that she didn't come out the best singer. The show is not about singing. It's about searching for someone who could inspire—an idol. This is what Jasmine does!

Even if they did not write, she will already be remembered to have been "instrumental" in the Antonio Tinio that was provoked. She was singing about the ties that bind us Filipinos across nations. We may not have been able to toss like the Fil-Ams, but our prayers are going to bring this kid the victory she deserves... it may not be the crown, but the inspiration rule of making a very divided race here and abroad. It's time to heal!

I hope you all support our quixotic plan to bring this girl back home and build a career. Concrete plans will be posted here soon. If you could help, get in touch with key people from the government. Friends are getting in touch with Mike Bocan in New York, Ariana Gilmartin, while we begin to get Bitoy Moreno on board the marketing and Jasmine's professional fee.

Let's prove wrong Sen. Eddie Villanueva's assumption that one can only lift up this nation by becoming "born-again" in our own image. This imperfect way, we have a hand to build this nation!

Call me mad but I'm madly in love with my country!

—RUDOLF B. LICLICAN II,
jbgl1997@yahoo.com

Be the dedicated and true servants you promised

NOW that the May 10 elections are over, without any exception, all winning candidates from the president down to senatorial candidates must remember that they were elected to become the people's dedicated and true servants, not to be their wastrel and cruel masters.

The winning candidates should fulfill all their election promises to end the suffering of many people. They should not ignore the fact that the majority of Filipinos are living like hell in their own country.

They should exercise the laws without fear or favor, and their friends, relatives and foes should be treated fairly and equally.

They should make themselves approachable and accountable to their constituents.

They should be grateful for constructive criticisms instead of taking them hard or for granted.

And, last of all, they should always pray for God's guidance in helping solve the many problems of their constituents, particularly in helping improve the life of the poorest of the poor.

—PACITA L. LAYOR (MD)
Dumbrique Compound,
Hungay Padad,
MIM 8127), Lucena City

Not just during elections, Brother!

I AGREE! Sen. Edsa Villanueva's statement on corrupted campaign. I also understand who is the one touch grassroots level—it was because many of our people have lost their sense of righteousness.

Unbelievably corruption is now the outside characteristic of government. This national set is considered by practically all members of our society—religious leaders included. Many of them also abhorred change and condemn guilty of condoning corruption, compromising on income and most distressing and tax evasion. The law officers and lawyers find themselves guilty of falsification and many negligence and worst of all, they themselves give tribute to these low acts.

If Brother Eddie is really serious, he should think beyond the elections and the campaign period. He can never reform society if his movement is only active during election time. His movement should start grass-roots action way before the elections and then he can achieve the groundswell is hoped for in this election.

—GAUDIOSO
gaucon@cityweb.ph.info

Silence of the media

PEPANADO Boc Jr.'s claim that he won in the counting but that the media are reporting the opposite is plain and simple nonsense. Why would anyone do a thing like that? Why would media cooperate with them? Why would they not take it wrong about?

Some newspapers publish their leaders with knight explanations over a reader's comment on a matter of opinion or perception or opinion. How come they are alone on their claim, when, in a direct affront to the people's will?

Could it mean that the statement is true? Just wondering.

—FERDINAND E. DIGAL
Quezon City
SAY IT Showbusiness, Hiligaan, San Mateo, Rizal

Does Roco deserve praise?

TIME has reference to Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus' letter (INQ, 5/12/04) in response to Comelec to "Comelec Chairman Benjamin Abalos and presidential candidate Raul Roco.

The way I see it, De Quirino did not actually ignore the contributions of the Department of Education teachers, officials and staff to the implementation of the department's many projects and activities.

I think De Quirino just wanted to point out what Roco contributed to the Deped. But to improve the Deped—during his time as a secretary? Do we need to praise Roco's achievements at the DepED? Are we fortunate that we have capable and competent leaders? Isn't it what we need to justify the trust of the People to have—and during Roco's time there?

Does someone remember the money Roco was charged by the Department of Budget and Management Secretary Emilia Boncodin as Good Governance? (Sasot). President Macapagal-Arroyo done the same thing to a worse extent? Did Ida Macapagal do such a thing for good governance or for endorsement? Just asking.

—NOEL SOTELO, JR.,
Caloocan City,
nbsoto@yahoo.com

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
CENTRAL LUZON REGIONAL OFFICE
Cabanatuan City

NOTICE OF SALE THROUGH MARKET DETERMINED PRICING (SMDP)

The National Food Authority, Central Luzon Regional Office, Cabanatuan City, through its regional committee is pursuant to the Sale of Palay, Maize and Rice Through Market Determined Pricing (SMDP) by the following and awarded one (1) 2,000 (Two) thousand (2) to (3) 3,000 bags more or less in the locations as follows:

Lot	Region	Warehouse	Location	Area	Volume	Price
1	Region I	Warehouse 1	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Warehouse 2	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Warehouse 3	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Warehouse 4	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 1	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 2	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 3	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 4	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 5	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 6	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 7	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 8	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 9	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 10	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 11	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 12	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
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		Annex 15	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
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		Annex 95	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 96	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 97	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 98	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 99	Cabanatuan City	20,000		
		Annex 100	Cabanatuan City	20,000		

The sale is on a per lot basis. All bid shall be in cash, and open to all NFA-licensed rice traders/millers. The official bid to be opened on June 1, 2004 at 10:00 AM at the NFA Regional Office, Cabanatuan City. Any prospective bidders who have submitted the following requirements to the RMAC are qualified to participate:

1. Letter of intention addressed to the Regional Manager stating name of bidder, address and contact number;
2. In case of representative, a duly notarized authorization from the Owner/Chairman authorizing the representative to personally participate and file the bid in behalf of the bidder, to represent the company in SMDP and other activities related thereto;
3. Valid and updated Mayor's/Business Permit and Tax Identification Number (TIN).

The SMDP shall be conducted at the NFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Central Luzon Regional Office (CLRO), Cabanatuan City on the following schedule:

ACTIVITIES	BID	DATE
1. Pre-bid Conference (Lots 1 and 2)	May 31, 2004 at 10:00 AM	June 1, 2004 at 10:00 AM
2. Pre-bid Conference (Lots 3 and 4)	June 01, 2004	10:00 AM
3. SMDP Proper	June 01, 2004	2:00 pm

The SMDP terms and conditions and Transfer Facility guidelines are posted at the NFA-RMAC Secretariat at NFA Regional Office Building, Regional Compound, Brgy. Sangitan East, Cabanatuan City. Interested bidders may secure bid documents during the scheduled SMDP at the NFA-RMAC Secretariat at NFA Regional Office Building, Regional Compound, Brgy. Sangitan East, Cabanatuan City. For further information, please contact the following: RMAC Chairman at telephone no. (044)-463-1007, (044)-600-1180 and (044)-600-1183.

NFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to waive any defects or irregularities found therein and to declare any such offer null and void without any liability and to disqualify any bidder who is found to be engaged in any illegal activities in the SMDP. The decision of the Committee is conformed by the Regional Manager and is final and executory.

(Sgd.) RUBEN J. RUBIO
RMAC Chairman
Asst. Regional Director

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

P.O. Box 2928, Phone: 832-3535
T.M. Kalaw Street, Fax: 832-1125
Ermita, Manila 1000 Fax: 832-1125
Philippines

INVITATION TO SUBMIT BID PROPOSAL

May 10, 2004

The Philippine e-Library Project through its Project Manager, the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), is requesting bid proposals for the supply, delivery and installation of the following software systems and services. Supplier must be an authorized dealer of Oracle products, with proven support capability for Oracle and solutions in target platforms. Support experience in installing and supporting large enterprise Oracle sites is a must.

Interested parties may obtain the Pre-qualification Requirements, Instruction to Bidders from the BAC Secretariat, Asteroide Centro, telephone no. 524-16-05 and Toronto Hotspot, telephone no. 524-16-06 from Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. the prospective must be received later than 2:00 p.m. on June 15, 2004, addressed to:

Ms. Teodila L. Manansilla
The Bid and Award Committee
The National Library
T.M. Kalaw Street, Ermita, Manila

The National Library reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any informality or accept such bids as may be considered advantageous to the government. Further, the Government no obligation whatsoever to compensate any or indemnify the bidders for expenses or losses that may be incurred in preparation of their bids.

(Sgd.) TEOFILA L. MANSANILLO
Chairman, BAC

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and publicity by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate Cindy Ingal at: Chino Roces Avenue corner Tapar and Makaraig Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to 896-2027/893-8537/479-1, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Privacy of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager numbers for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Across the NATION

Special polls set in Vizcaya village

WARM WELCOME
A lone guard stands in attention, his shotgun drawn, as the municipal hall of San Mariano, Isabela following an attack by armed men that killed a police man. Bullet marks are seen on the wall.

Ballot snatching leads to failure of elections

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—The Commission on Elections has approved the holding of special elections on May 29 in Barangay Binuangan, Dupax del Norte town.

Elbia Dalilis, provincial election assistant, said the Comelec declared a failure of elections in the village after a masked candidate and his men allegedly took at least three ballot boxes inside the Binuangan Elementary School on May 11.

Dalilis said they have asked military and police officials to secure the village to ensure order in and peaceful elections in the area next week.

The Comelec has delayed the proclamation of the winning candidates for the provincial board's fifth seat in the province's southern district pending the results of the Binuangan elections.

The seat is being contested by Board Member Efren Quilico and Mayor Teodorico Dalilis Jr. of Sta. Fe town.

In an earlier interview, Col. Ely Marbin, commanding officer of the Army's 54th Infantry Battalion, said their reports indicated that Dupax del Norte Mayor Jesus Almario and three men took the ballot boxes from the precincts at 1:00 a.m. on May 11.

According to witnesses who asked not to be named, Almario, allegedly armed with a rifle and accompanied by three men, fired his gun before he entered the premises and ordered his men to take the ballot boxes.

Almario denied the allegations. He said the charges were concocted by his political rivals. *Ben Moore Ebreo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

20 hurt in Isabela panic

SAN MARIANO, Isabela—Twenty people were hurt in a stampede as the municipal hall here on Thursday when two men aboard a bicycle alerted employees that a bomb was planted at the hall.

Chief Insp. Alfonso Ibarra, Cagayan Valley police director, said the men in search for a non-existent bomb was found. "It was a false alarm," he told the inquirer.

The alarm, however, forced 150 local government workers to leave their work.

The incident came 13 days after armed men attacked the town hall and burned ballot boxes stored there.

Milnair Bergonia, a government employee, said she saw the two men shouting at them to leave the town hall because a bomb was about to explode.

The workers panicked. Some of them stumbled and were injured.

Lorenzo Domingo, government employee, sustained washed sprained from a 15-meter high fall while they heard about the bomb threat. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Environmentalists promote 'world car-free day'

By Desiree Caluza
Phil Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—With world oil prices climbing and public utility drivers marching to the streets, wouldn't this world be better without cars?

Environmentalists and clean air advocates have started promoting the "World Car-free Day" on Sept 22 to keep urban citizens responsive to the world's oil market's spiraling demand and the worsening air pollution.

"We underestimate the actual cost of cars because their maintenance and fuel costs do not rise at the same time," said Emma Lantoy Dayao, a clean air advocate and campaign officer of the activist cyclist group the Firefly Brigade.

"Oil is an exhaustible fuel and a lot of public money goes to that. And as long as you have something to eat, you eat little," she said.

The campaign on the world car-free day was one of the issues raised during a forum on the Clean Air Act here. The forum, dubbed as "Kapaspasan Hangin sa Bagnio," was organized by groups such as the Mil-CBN Jimmy Gok, Cyberbayan, Foundation for Communication Initiatives and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Dayao said there is a growing movement in the country that calls for the ban use of cars. This movement is spearheaded by clean air advocates who are into cycling, she said.

In 1999, only 16 percent of Filipinos owned cars and the rest suffered because the resources that should have been enjoyed by the people had been used for cars, Dayao said.

She said it is unfair that cars occupy most of the space on the streets. It is also unjust that road transport-dominated disaster public investments for building and maintenance, she said.

Cordillera jeep drivers seek special rate above fare hike OKd by gov't

BAGUIO CITY—Drivers in the Cordillera are seeking a special rate on top of a P1.50 fare increase authorized by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board.

Zacharias Oliang, regional president of the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations in the Philippines (Fodjadap), said Cordillera drivers are normally granted an extended rate that varies from 25 centavos to 50 centavos because of the steeper mountainous terrain.

But the region's new fare may also have to encompass inflation.

Oliang's group is hoping new fuel injection method (sfim), which President Macapagal-Arroyo has mandated for all gasoline vehicles.

Oliang attended a briefing by the Department of Energy, which is encouraging all public utility vehicles to use 5 percent of alternative fuel like coconut methyl ester, which Arroyo promised to cheaper than regular.

The DoE admits that existing engines could not consume 100 percent of pure fuel without burning their system, but a small dosage of the fuel substitutes engine-corrupting pollutants.

Oliang said they have yet to factor in the addition to their prepaid fare increase here. But he said jeepney drivers have started raising extra fuel, which costs P70 a liter.

He said the drivers have banded a cooperative that intends to consolidate their fuel to all gasoline and public vehicles "because it would be cheaper for all consumers to buy this in bulk."

The DoE is scouting for a city for that could host a test fuel station filling said local gasoline dealers have refused to sell coco fuel due to legal corporate issues.

Fe Agustinos, a city planning officer in charge of energy conservation projects, said the city council is preparing a resolution that would implement Mr Macapagal's directive in Baguio.

"We just need to determine from the Commission on Audit whether we can now pump in P1 liter into [Republic Act 9136] or have all line agencies in Baguio buy from a single coco fuel supplier without undergoing bidding as it would be cheaper," Agustinos said.

In Bulacan, transport groups in the province welcomed the P1.50 fare increase.

Jun Pereda, president of the Jeepney Transport Coalition of the Philippines (composed of 10 jeepney and FX operators and driver federations in Central, Northern and Southern Luzon, and the division a timely because of the recent increase in prices of basic commodities. Blended Cebu-Pilipino/Northern Luzon Bureau, with a report from Gertrudis Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

FAMILY DAY
Visitors have their picture taken framed by one of the dozens of decorations that brought the streets of Lucban, Quezon to life during the recent celebration of the Gat Kiko de Labrador feast in the town.

Kin of maid who died in Lebanon cry out for truth

By Tobinta Baraki-Fuentes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

TUBERSLEY, Pangasinan—All she wanted was to help her younger siblings go to school and pay some of her family's debts, but death cut short the dream of Catherine Ramirez, a domestic helper in Lebanon.

Ramirez's grandparents now brought home to her family in Barangay Cabaruan for burial on Saturday amid doubts on reports about what really caused her death in a room in where she hoped to earn enough money to send home.

The official report of the Philippine Embassy in Beirut showed that Ramirez, 21, fell from the window of her employer on Nahid Street, while she was escaping on the night of May 4.

But Ramirez's relatives said there have every reason to doubt the report.

The tension before, Barbara, said on April 26, Catherine called her sister Jovie Jovish, complaining about the maltreatment she had been receiving from her employer.

She pleaded with me and my parents to help her go home," Jovish said.

Jovish said she sought the help of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration but was told to go to the Department of Foreign Affairs because Ramirez was not a registered overseas worker. Ramirez used a tourist visa when she went to Lebanon in November last year.

Earlier escape

Earlier on April 26, Ramirez escaped from her employer with the help of her employer's wife. Ramirez told her relatives here that Ariah was also maltreating his wife.

"In fact, his wife brought me here to the Philippine embassy because I was afraid to go home," Ramirez told them. But with her short child, and did not return anymore to Ariah's apartment," Jovish said, quoting Ramirez.

But instead of repatriating her to the Philippines, the embassy's staff reportedly brought Ramirez back to her employer.

Again, Ramirez sneaked up her story, asking why she was not able to help her go home. She also said her employer demanded that she pay back the $1,700 he paid to the Lebanese recruiter who brought her there.

"We were able to come up with the amount and deposited it at the Union Bilanco Bank on May 3, but we instructed her to tell her employer to bring her first to the Philippine embassy before we would give the Western Union's control number," Monteros said.

Text message

On that day, Ramirez sent a text message saying the narrative was already in the house and asked that their money transfer's control number be sent to her.

"But we told her to ask Ariah to take her to the embassy first," Tuberbet said. The employer refused.

The following day, Ramirez was dead. Her body found in the garden below Ariah's apartment.

What makes the Ramirezes angry was the seemingly uncaring attitude of the Philippine embassy staff in Lebanon. They questioned why the staff turned over her to her employer whom she had accused of maltreating her.

"The staff should have consulted my sister's complaints so as soon because her employer's wife had already reported her to the embassy," Dorish said.

She also protested about the "inconsistencies" Continent. she and her father allegedly received on April 28 from the Alberto-Salonga center, a Department of Foreign Affairs employee, where she asked for help to repatriate Ramirez back to the Philippines.

Trivial

"He told us that my sister's case was trivial compared to the other overseas workers. He said my sister should have known that she was working in a country with a different culture," Dorish said.

She told Salvador that all she was asking was for the DFA to help bring her sister home. Salvador said he would look into the case.

On May 5, Salvador went to Beirut to attend the Arab Labor Organization's meeting. Ramirez died on May 4.

"If only Salvador acted quickly on our request to help my sister go home ... if only the Philippine embassy's staff in Lebanon considered my sister's case a serious one, she would still be alive today," Dorish told the reporter.

"It's painful to lose a daughter who was young. We don't know what really happened ... if she was pushed through the window or what ... maybe she was calling out for help," Ramirez, a fan driver, said.

ELECTION 2004

Youngest governor in RP; Quezon shows opposition color

■ Biancil Abenitez Klark Lapid, 25, became the youngest governor ever elected in the country. The youngest governor to be held by the late Barangay "Nitoy" Aquino Jr when he was appointed by the governor Lito Lapid, son of actor and outgoing Pampanga Gov Manuel "Lito" Lapid, first outgoing Representative Juan Pablo Bondoc and Amanda Cruz Dungca in the race.

■ Rafael "Rafi" Tuason Jr, the only child of Antonio "Tonyboy" Tuason Jr, the Union of Lubao (DD) received 53,009 votes while Tessa Cruz got 59 votes. "I promise with my opponent Tessa Cruz" for his fully in making a mockery of the elections here. "I will

INQUIRER Visaysas

E-mail: yahoo@inq.com

Jobo Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rodrigo L. Bermudez

From destroyers to protectors of nature

By Rory G. Amurao
Inquirer Visayas City

THEIRS is not yet a case of starting small and becoming big. Although relatively small in terms of assets and wealth, they are very rich in terms of "bayanihan" spirit, which among other things, made them achieve rare accomplishments.

The Bobo-bobo Farmer's Association (BBA) and the Bailay Farmer's Association have been into several but were not active while at the same time, championing the cause of the environment.

This is among the reasons the BBA was named national winner of the Recognizing Individuals Toward Community Empowerment (RITCE) in 2001 and finaling the regional winners in 2003.

The two associations are composed of residents living within the watershed area in Barangays Bobo-bobo and Bailay in Bacon, about 14 kilometers south of the capital Sorsogon City.

Some of them residents used to cut down trees inside the watershed to earn a living. Others were into the destructive slash-and-burn farming.

The story of life had taken a toll on the environment. It even came to a point that the creek had dried up in Barangay Bobo-bobo.

But the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) stepped in and organized the residents to become protectors instead of destroyers of the environment.

The PNOC took interest on the two villages, reasonably that it was conducting geothermal activities in the nearby Barangay Magsaysay, another village located within the watershed.

Jovilina Sangcopan, BBA president, said the water supply of Bobo-bobo started to decline in 1992 mainly due to excessive cutting of trees.

OFFICERS and members of the Bobo-bobo Farmers Association and PNOC extension workers pose inside the association's newly-built multi-purpose building.

Environment awareness

Two years later, the PNOC personnel went to Bobo-bobo and organized the residents. The first thing the agency did was conduct training and seminar on environmental protection.

"It did not take a long time for us to realize that we must preserve our trees and the environment. With the help of PNOC, we stopped our illegal activities," said Sangcopan in Lobasan.

To their pleasant surprise, the springs came back to life as water started flowing again in the village. As a result, the water needs of some of Bacon's low laying barangays have been augmented.

Sangcopan said this can clear was one of the reasons the BBA won the Gawad Lopez award in 2003.

The Bobo-bobo residents did not only become forest guards but entrepreneurs as well, with the help of the PNOC's support project to organize them and the introduction of some business ideas.

Now, the 75 active members of the BBA are engaged in cattle fattening, hydro production, loan mortgage, upland fishery and nursery (shoot) watering.

There are other undertakings by individual members or collectively. Each member gets a share of the profits, while a certain percentage is set aside for their association.

At present, the association's assets have reached more than P600,000 both in cash and in real property.

Resistance to change

The Bailay Farmers Association, on the other hand, is one of the earliest groups organized by PNOC. Formed in the late 80s, this association also institutionalizes the "bayanihan spirit."

Dolores F. Linarese, PNOC's extension officer and community organizer, revealed that at the beginning, the residents of Barangay Bailay were against the idea of organizing mainly because they were used to their way of life.

But with continuous training and seminars, she added that the people in the area realized the need to help each other and possess the resources.

Now, the association has more than 75 active members who are into agroforestry with about 50 hectares planted to coffee, root crops, banana and black pepper. They are also engaged in loan mortgage, copra production, cinamay weaving, and cottage metal and metalwork.

Gil Bacolodo, PNOC project leader in Bobo-bobo and Bailay, said they are now helping the group market their products especially the coffee.

Maria Lourdes, Bailay's former vice president and present top member, said income generated by these associations is divided by the members. Their assets have now reached almost P1 million.

Volunteer work

Aside from this, the association does not have to hire employees to take care of the burial, clean the premises of their multi-purpose building, among others.

Jose Inciballo, Bailay vice president, said it has been their policy that all members should do at least one day in a month for volunteer work in the association. Non-compliance would mean paying a penalty of P20.

There are associations here are made it big, financially. Their value is not on the cash register but on their surrounding environment from downstairs to protectors of the environment, while earning a little money on the side.

Youngest gov in RP; Quezon goes opposition

For more pages, turn to

claiming Garay as duly elected mayor. And then suddenly, we [learned] that there was a press proclamation," Fr. Eloy Bermejo, South Up Social Network, said.

Comelec commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, who was former Comelec 12 director, said Mendiola assistant election area in the past elections.

Maguindanao

■ Elsewhere in Maguindanao, it is power victory for the Ampatuans. Gov. Datu Andal Ampatuan, the patriarchal image of the clan who won a second term of office, unopposedly inside his residence in Shariff Aguak town as his son and presidential assistant Zaldy Ampatuan, seven years after the election.

The elder Ampatuan defeated another royal, former Rep. Rashid Mandacan by a wide margin.

Incoming mayor, who is also the Sultan Datu Bimbo Sinsuat, won over Datu Mamagih Candao, son of former Maguindanao and the [illegible] Region in Muslim Mindanao Datu Datu Candao.

Ampatuan's win Zaldy easily clinched the reappointed of Shariff Aguak because he was unopposed. Another son, Anwar, was pre-halted vice mayor.

In Datu Saudi Ampatuan town, Gov. Ampatuan's grandson Saudi Ampatuan Jr., 31, was also elected and proclaimed mayor while his nephew, Hadji Ahmad S. Ampatuan, was proclaimed vice mayor.

In Datu Unsay, Andal Ampatuan, Jr., also was unopposed. He beat another royal, incumbent vice mayor Sultan Datu Ampatuan.

In Mamasapano town, Ahmad M. Ampatuan, son-in-law of Datu Andal and his cousin Shadi, won as mayor and vice mayor respectively.

In Ampatuan town, brothers Shariff Sangkil and Sacaria Sangkil were proclaimed as mayor and vice mayor respectively. The Sangkils are grand nephews of Datu Andal.

Gov. Andal's nephew Sultan Jimmy Ampatuan Sinsuat, 26, is running, also got reelected as representative.

Elsewhere in the province, residents of rural families also trudged their opposition.

■ In Sen. Otto Sinsuat town, Labor Sinsuat was proclaimed mayor while his father Datu, the former mayor, won as vice mayor.

In Sultan Mastura town, proclaimed mayor and vice mayor were Armando Mastura, a younger brother of proclaimed Sultan Rasiden Sinsuat Datu Mastura. The elder Mastura's daughter Sultan Bebiha would serve as vice mayor of Sultan Mastura.

In General SK Pendatun, Sultana Pendatun, reelected as vice mayor in the municipality was with 8,177 votes while a relative, Bonnie Kali became vice mayor.

In Talayan town, Hadji Ali Mlo, Sultana and his nephew Daphal Mlo-Sultana were proclaimed the re-elected mayor and vice mayor.

In Paglat town, elected mayor was Abdulkarim Langkuno while the vice mayor was Freddie Talusan.

■ In Parang, Maguindanao, mayor-elect Tahib Abo and reelected mayor Vice Mayor Adnan Sinsuat, a member of an Islamic civil family, have been proclaimed. Friday by municipal election officer Ajuan Lin as duly-elected mayor and vice mayor, respectively.

Abo was against reelectionist mayor and former Army Lt. Nemesio Saraga.

Batasan

■ In Batasan City former Rep. Charito Plaza of the powerful Plaza clan, failed to make a comeback after she lost to redeployed Rep. Loreto Leo S. Ong. But the other members of the clan, including Democrito Plaza II, who ran in the majority seat of Batasan, have won.

Democrito's two brothers, Rodolfo Plaza and Adolfo Edward Plaza were reelected as representative and governor, respectively. Reports from Teresita Ortajero, PEO Central Luzon Desk; Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PEO Southern Luzon Bureau; Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr. Bureau; Jaime Bino-Moy V. de Guzman, Shari-E Mendoza, the Bony E. Alfanta and Franklin A. Caligasi, PDI Mindanao Bureau.

ROUNDUP

Victory against NPA

OCTOBER, Batangas — The winning candidates in Lipa mayoralty election in Barangay Bolbok, Mataas na Kahoy and Lipa City Proper's Brgy. Bolbok and a council from a candidate can win over without paying the rebels' permit-to-campaign (PTC) fee Mayor Renato Laurencio, who declared an all-out war against the NPA last year, said the rebels had campaigned against him, harassed the voters and destroyed his campaign materials. Laurencio also escaped ambush in a separate ambush by suspected NPA rebels prior to the elections. He said the violent campaign affected his candidacy as he only got a 600-vote lead over closest rival Joan Lorenzana. He was a landslide winner in 2001. "I offended one group, but the people don't want them (NPA) anymore," Laurencio told the Inquirer. "I told the people, the government protects them just a year to your income, the NPA collects 10 percent forced taxation per barangay. In the government, income probably 40 [illegible] Ask the NPA if they were committed to the CPP (unrelated issue)," he said. His administration will focus on peace and order and development projects, he said. — Joel Orozco Bonoan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Protest in Catanduanes

VIRAC, Catanduanes — The Commission on Elections has not excluded the proclamation of reinstated Gov. Leandro Fernandez of either governor-elect Joseph Cua or Comelec Manila on the protest of his rival for the gubernatorial race, Hercules Casiano. Former Bato Mayor Joseph Cua, on Wednesday filed a protest claiming that they discovered discrepancies in seven precincts during the canvassing. Casiano therefore obliged to proclaim Cua by July 1st." Before the complaint, Hercules was leading with 45,884 votes as against Cua's 41,301 votes. Only the 11 mayors, including Nelson Nuñez Virac, Bato, Joey S. Alberto II and four representatives, Alexander Umali, Bagamanoc, Rodel Umali,

Gringo: From coup plotter to peace adviser?

Previous page

zano: "virtually on the eve of the resumption of formal peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Kuala Lumpur and the National Democratic Front three People's Army in Oslo."

"Both talks are on the brink of crucial breakthroughs," he said.

As an Army colonel and chief operative of then Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, Honasan played a key role in the 1986 EDSA uprising that toppled the strongman Ferdinand Marcos. He later led coup attempts against Marcos' successor, President Corazon Aquino.

He is accused of masterminding the July 2003 failed mutiny of mostly junior military officers, who holed out at the Oakwood building in Makati City.

'Protecting votes'

In Wenzel's account, Honasan assured us reform the people that he had traveled to Mindanao "to protect the votes of the IPMR1 and all political parties, and not to foment a new destabilization move."

Honasan said guarding the ballots was "part of the mandate" of his office and fulfilled his agreement with the ruling Lakas-CMD and Ed Sereno, his president, "free, clean, credible, honest and violent-free elections," according to Wenzel.

That agreement also committed the PDEA to "breakout in our soldiers unfailing loyalty to the Constitution and the flag," and to support the Lakas program for constitutional reforms, particularly a shift to a parliamentary and federal system of government.

Wenzel was instrumental in the forging of the agreement. He also played an active role in the peace negotiations initiated by Ed Sereno in the 1990s with the then Reform the Armed Forces Movement, which included Honasan and other military rebels involved in coup attempts against the Aquino administration.

Wenzel is a cousin of Marcos and was also close to Enrile, who is seeking to make a comeback in the Senate under the KBP banner.

HAND HUDDLE: Honasan with Speaker Jose de Venecia

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Popular anger building up, JV Ejercito warns

By Cathlea Pulido

CAVITE 10 enough

San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito said yesterday popular anger was again building up like it did in 2001, when he failed was booted out of office and detained on plunder charges.

He drew parallels between what happened to former President Joseph Estrada and the current situation of actor Fernando Poe Jr., who has accused the administration of attempting to cheat him of victory in the May 10 election.

"Before too long sinisnot (Cheat is enough)," Ejercito said.

"If the people see that there is widespread cheating and their votes not counted, I think that the masses will get angry again."

Ejercito added, "President Estrada would not allow himself to be "undermined by those who think they can take the law into their hands."

PNP commander Cesfilo S. Rangel, however, downplayed the reported security threat facing the President and said the red alert status was routine.

He said the deployment of more than 5,000 policemen on Roxas Boulevard where the Palace was a precautionary measure against rallies demanding an urgent electoral fiasco.

Loyalty check!

As rumors of another threats fourteen swings swirled, Lt. Col. Adelo B. Bandonan relinquished his post as head of the President, (ret.)Gen. Eduardo Ermita, Lt. Col. Edwin Bernard L. Nicol.

The Presidential Guard is a unit of the PNP and is directly in charge of the security around the Palace itself.

Rangel denied speculations that Bandonan was relieved of his post after a loyalty check among the members.

"He has to be replaced because he would seek medical treatment," said Rangel, who denied reports that Bandonan was given a hair conditional a loyalty check among its members.

He refused to say whether the PNP contingent had been increased since the red alert was declared.

"These are just measures to keep the personnel intact and ready for any eventuality. But if you ask me whether we have reports that something will happen, none. And we could if we see have such reports," Rangel said.

Rangel also said that the President's inclusion since the May 10 elections was her own decision since she has not been made any restrictions on her movements out of Malacañang.

He said the PNP gave no guidance to reports of an ammotion coup attempt against the President and that she could go anywhere she pleased.

Security briefing

Later in the day, Mr Macapagal held a security briefing in the Palace attended by top officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police and her Cabinet.

The President assured the military and the police for a job well done in making the elections generally peaceful and orderly despite election related violence incidents that were "largely isolated and limited to local controversies."

She admitted that, while there might have been "substantiated charges of irregularities effect at the local accounts, ...on the whole, the consensus is broad and firm that the elections were bereft of a deliberate and systematic fraud on a national scale."

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya told the President that the military was ready to implement its post-election contingent measures to ensure that the election process was carried on all the way to the proclamation of the winner.

Ready for protest actions

At Camp Aguinaldo, the military reaffirmed it was ready to quell violence from any group which might disrupt next week's canvassing by Congress of votes for president and vice president.

It said the Armed Forces' National Capital Region Command, under Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza, was prepared to meet any protest actions that might accompany the vote canvassing.

"We will see to it that the canvassing of the votes in Congress would be peaceful," AFP Public Information Office chief Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero told the beacon. "We don't want any disturbances or anti-democratic mass movements. We have the plans and resources to confront any serious from any group."

Indicating it was confident in handling any protests, the AFP said in the same breath that it had downgraded its alert level "from red to blue," meaning only half of its forces would be on high alert.

Next from those troops who were sent to assist in ensuring of the certificate of canvass at the Philippine International Convention Center, others who were deployed to provide security to Comelec officials and canvassing areas nationwide were recalled back to perform their traditional counterinsurgency duties," an AFP statement said.

Braganza's unit had deployed around 3,000 troops and security in Metro Manila and surrounding provinces on election day to secure the voting. They were to be on alert until the end of the election period on June 9.

Antiriot troops

Antiriot troops will be deployed only on request from the Philippine National Police to confront any violent protests, NCR-Comm spokesperson Maj. Reyes Raimund Lumawag said.

Supporters of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. have threatened to launch protests, claiming that they won the presidential election and accusing the administration of massive cheating.

Lucero said the AFP was still on alert against any attacks from "the usual threat groups," like the Abu Sayyaf militants.

The AFP raised its alert status to "red"—meaning all forces were canceled and troops confined to barracks—prior to the elections.

Unrest

In Davao City, opposition Sen. Blowpoint Boisman warned there could be unrest regardless of whoever was proclaimed winner of the presidential race.

Speaking to reporters here on Thursday, Boisman said unrest is likely in the event the new president is proclaimed.

Boisman said that he could feel the restlessness of some sectors, while they awaited the proclamation of the presidential winner.

He said this restlessness could be attributed to claims of massive cheating by the administration in favor of Mr Macapagal's victory.

Asked if this could spoil results of the elections, Boisman said: "I am happy because of the restlessness of the people."

"We really don't know what our country is going to be," Boisman said, adding he was worried about the situation.

"We don't know the consequences of all these things we have been doing," he said.

Implications on stability

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay told reporters the opposition was banking on the integrity of Congress.

Asked what the opposition would do if Mr Macapagal was proclaimed president, Binay said the opposition would only decide when that finally happened.

The camp of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, another opposition president candidate, has also warned that the slow pace of vote counting is contributing to political unrest.

"It is just that 11 days after election day, it is still unclear who has won the elections," Lacson spokesperson Angelito Banayo, said in a statement.

"This has implications on the political stability when the next administration comes in," Banayo said.

Banayo said that the slow pace of the counting had given some political groups an excuse to claim they were cheated, inciting threats of street protests.

"This has grave implications for political stability in the time the new administration takes over," he said.

No clear winner

Banayo said that, with the accuracy of their estimates in the presidential race, those who are trailing behind in the count could not conclude in any particular candidate.

In fact, only Raul Roco of Aksyon ng Mga Aso has conceded defeat.

"Makakadaya and its supporters still talk of counting. How can you concede if you don't know whom to concede to?" Banayo said. With reports from Norman Bordadora, Anthony E. Alfeche, Phil Mendiones Bureaus

Palace on alert; foes flirting with sedition, GMA warns

From page A1

THE GRADING commander of an Army artillery unit gives the go-signal to fire a howitzer gun of one of his men. The gun was never used. EDD ACEBUCHE

Bayan Muna files case vs 13 canvassers

From page A1

Senior President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo warned that this could be part of a deliberate campaign to cheat his party of victory. "Malinaw na we are looking at the Lacson-unseeming in the party-list elections, the clear cases of vote-stealing committed against Bayan Muna indicates that there are serious moves to deny our party-another seat in Congress," Ocampo said.

The group alleged that Joel Reyes, Jessica Villaris, Angelito Rebal, Rolando Bonita and Constantine Bagtasos of the Quezon City provincial board of canvassers appeared to have altered the results of the party-list elections based on the certificates of returns and statements of votes.

The votes for Bayan Muna, the group said, were listed as 18,099 in the provincial COC, but a recalculation of the provincial total showed it got only 17,880 votes.

Bayan, in the same documents, was shown to have 2,124 votes when it actually garnered only 1,881 while Abasi got 1,042 when it had 1,004. Bayan Muna, Abasi and Gabriela are allegedly got 9,754 votes in the provincial SOC but the COC showed these it had 9,629 votes.

In Midsayo, Davao del Sur, Bayan Muna watchers informed its local office that they got 1,126 votes, but when they went to the COC issued by the municipal board of canvassers, they saw that the votes were down to 626 by 126.

After lodging a protest, the canvassers complained the acts of members of voters back to the party list group. Barangka Bayan Muna filed a complaint against board members Thelma Magnaye, Yolanda Cabo-ranillos and Juanita Anjet, together with other unnamed members of the canvassers' group for the "alterations."

Party-list group Gabriela and Migrante in Cagayan also protested three votes were altered changed by provincial board of canvassers members when it got Gabriela only 45 votes in the COC when it actually got 2,076 votes in the SOC. Bayan, in the same documents, was given only 45 votes when it actually got 101 votes.

Siri Gutierrez, a lawyer for the militant groups, agreed with Ocampo's observation that some actions in the election are and the governments may not want Bayan Muna to serve another term in Congress.

"Although the votes were recounted, we fear similar irregularities could have occurred in many other areas where Bayan Muna has no poll watchers," added Gutierrez-me, also a nominee for the party-list group.

CNN says chem warfare plot uncovered in Mindanao

From page A1

person Agency (CIA).

In an exclusive report last night, CNN interviewed Philippine National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez who said he would not be surprised if the terrorist group launched chemical attacks in the country.

CNN said the documents revealed that Jemaah had tested toxic chemicals somewhere in Philippines for possible terror attacks. It did not specify the places.

Philippine officials said the documents were a clear-cut threat, according to CNN.

Gonzales told CNN: "The psychology of this group is that the more civilian casualties, the better. The more horrible the inflicted damage on humanity, the better."

Gonzales added: "I will not be surprised if they will engage in chemical warfare in the Philippines."

Jemaah has been blamed for most of the terror attacks in Southeast Asia, including the recent ones, including the deadly bombing of the Bali resort in Indonesia, which killed more than 200 people.

The military has estimated about 50 Jemaah militants are hiding in jungles in the southern Philippines after undergoing training in the area.

CNN's correspondent Alexis Rosas obtained a large portion of the classified Indonesian language documents and had it translated into English.

Toxic gases

The documents describe the characteristics of several toxic gases, such as cyanide, hydrogen sulfide and phosphine, as well as toxic bacteria, which cause botulism (cause food poisoning).

Some of the pages which Rosas obtained showed how these poisons were to be handed out of avoidable materials.

The toxic chemicals have been tested on farm animals, the network said.

One page describes use of hydrogen cyanide—the gas was mixed in a closed box with a lead-lining cabinet.

The rabbit died within half a minute.

In another test, cyanide was mixed with ordinary skin cream and exhibited into the skin on a rabbit's ear.

"The rabbit will bear it 6 minutes and die in 20," according to the documents.

Firing device

The main substance, the memo, has a section called Firing Device—how to deliver the poison to a terror attack, CNN said.

For botulism, the bacteria is to be mixed with liquified food and drink but the instruction says as of bacteria may of delivery still has to be found.

CNN said this was not the first time documents and videotapes had shown evidence of al-Qaida efforts to create poison weapons.

A tape obtained by CBS in Afghanistan also showed al-Qaida putting in drugs.

Not perfected

While the documents found in the Philippines have alarmed government officials across the region, an analysis of these outlines how difficult it is to turn bio-chemical agents into weapons, CNN said.

In nearly every case, "the firing device for operation was not yet perfected."

Another intelligence document obtained by CNN showed that as early as the mid-90's al-Qaida tried to convince another unnamed terror group in Asia to use cyanide—but on attacks, the network said.

The points was to be sprayed from perfume bottles.

The group's leader dismissed that plot as unrealistic then, but the discovery of this document, investigators say, shows the work to carry out a somewhat chemical attack continues, Rosas said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY, MAY 22, 2004

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METRO

Editor Abelardo S. Glorioso

ELECTIONS AFTERMATH

Manila piles up 270 tons of garbage

By Tarra Quismundo

AT 1 TIME when Metro Manila is trying to grapple with a worsening garbage problem, along come the polls that has produced 270 tons of post-election solid waste in Manila alone.

Now, the burden of solving the mess that they were partly responsible for rests on the newly-elected local government officials.

Yesterday, Manila's Department of Public Services (DPS) reported that it had finished tidying down and cleaning 90 percent of campaign materials plastered, hung or pasted all over the city during the campaign period.

Festivities over

"There is no longer that fiesta atmosphere," said DPS chief Rafael Rosseburg, referring to the colorful street characteristic of small-town celebrations.

The clean-up began immediately after the May 10 national and local elections and targeted buildings, structures and posters put up since the start of the national campaign in February.

Rosseburg said that only a few campaign materials were left in the city's smaller streets.

"We have cleaned the main thoroughfares. And there are just very few left which the barangays are cleaning up," said Rosseburg.

30 truckloads

And at this point, more than 30 truckloads of election waste, about 270 tons, have been removed. Rosseburg said that the materials, now garbage, could cost in millions of pesos.

The trash was brought to the temporary dumpsite at Plot 38 in the city's port area.

CHILDREN engage in what appeared to be playtime for a cause by helping tear away the layers of posters pasted up a wall along Pasig Boulevard in Pasig City.

Rosseburg said that the election refuse was collected mostly from around public markets, churches, and near schools which served as polling places for the election on May 10.

"We removed campaign materials of all candidates for president, senators, party-list, councilors, mayors and vice mayors," said Rosseburg.

He, however, would not say which among the administration or opposition candidates caused most of the mess saying the trash, for example, were layers upon layers of posters of rival parties.

For those posters, clean-up personnel had to use a flatbrush to lose them off.

The post-election clean-up, particularly the massive "cleansing" on Saturday was dubbed "Manila, Manila, Maglinis Tayo."

1,120 employees and barangay-assigned employees were asked to help out in removing campaign materials all over the city.

The DPS invited both losing and winning candidates to participate in the event, but only a few candidates came. The clean-up however pushed through, with the help of city employees and barangay officials.

North Metro warned: Rainy days are here

THERE was a time when the coming of the rains was occasion for joy and merrymaking. Those days, especially in the northern part of Metro Manila, rainy days were only a warning.

Recently, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) announced the onset of the rainy season.

Pagasa said the recent passage of typhoon "Betchi" has triggered the southwest monsoon, known locally as "Habagat," which is expected to bring rains to the country up to August.

And with the rains come floods that help turn sprawling areas to mangroves that may carry dengue.

As in Valenzuela City, where dengue cases are high, city health officer Rolando Obgano told residents to unclog drains and gutters to prevent water from accumulating when rain pours.

Clear water accumulated in old tires, uncovered basins, vases or bottles and even clogged roofs are perfect breeding sites for dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

Obgano added that residents should also be wary of diarrhea and typhoid fever, which are usually caused by drinking contaminated water.

Metropolis health officials recommend boiling drinking water from 10 to 15 minutes.

In Malabon City, social welfare and development head Bernardito de Galicia said parents should not let their children play near creeks or rivers, especially during high tide.

He said they were preparing for the rainy season by monitoring the occurrence of high tides.

According to her, the city already brought out its rubber boats to help evacuate victims of flooding. Edson Bandoc Jr. and Reinnah Delos Reyes

Makati to make drunk drivers pay high price

By Margaux Ortiz

DRIVERS apprehended in Makati City while drunk or under the influence of illegal drugs will soon pay a higher price.

The Makati City Council has passed an ordinance imposing a fine of P2,500 and/or suspension of not more than 30 days on drivers caught driving under the influence of drugs and liquor.

Drivers suspected of being drunk or high will be asked to undergo breath analysis and drug tests.

Those found positive will have their driver's licenses confiscated.

Mayor Jejomar Binay has directed the Makati Police Department, the Department of Public Safety and the Investigation and Detective Management Division to strictly enforce the ordinance, especially around Makati's entertainment establishments.

Binay also asked bar owners to inform their clients about the ordinance against drunk driving and its corresponding penalties.

"The city wants to prevent damage to property, physical harm to individuals, and even death, which may be caused by intoxicated drivers," Binay said in a statement.

Drivers who use prohibited drugs may also face additional charges under Republic Act 9165, or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act.

Malabon's new mayor text-ecuted

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

[illegible] about post-election exhibitions.

The mayor-elect of Malabon City, Canuto Oreta, was killed yesterday by suspected political opponents who spread text text messaging that he had died of a heart attack.

"Pinatawan kong alas Alkalde na malabon ako, (That's funny I'm very healthy)" Oreta told the Inquirer yesterday.

His campaign officer Alki Ilet added said text messages saying Oreta was hospitalized in the United States fled boon circulating as early as two days before elections.

Persistent rumor

Oddly, the rumors persisted even after Oreta was proclaimed mayor last week.

The latest rumor Oreta had died.

"Marikha kong sigaro yun. Buhay kong sibong magsasaka. (That's pure guff of politics. People probably don't have anything better to do.)" Oreta said.

He also said that since the election were over, people should just go back to work.

Asked whether his support is behind the text rumors, Oreta said they did not know.

"Kung gusto nila maghasik ulotulot kami. Mag Aswan to house hotel ulit. (If challenge them that we all visit houses again.)" he said.

Oreta, 64, got 50, 702 votes while setting city mayor Jejomar Binhang got 49, 872 votes. Another Sandoval 26, 716 votes while Melencio Sunga got 861 votes.

Light rail line 2 to suspend operations for 3 Sundays

By Clarissa Batino

THE LIGHT Rail Transit's line 2 running from Santolan in Pasig to Recto in Manila will suspend operations on three consecutive Sundays starting May 23 to complete improvements on the rail line.

LRT Authority administrator Pedro Pajardo said the company would have to finish installing Cemex on the 13.8-km rail system before summer start on June 7.

About 40,000 passengers who daily take the LRT line 2, also known as the Megaline, are expected to be affected.

"Our Line 2 will not have Sunday operations on May 23 and 30 and June 6 because we want to improve all the awkward and operational settings needed by the entire system prior to the opening of classes on June 7," Pajardo said.

Operations Manager Ed San Juan said it would take three days to complete the installation of coaxial shade walkway to ensure the safety of commuters on LRT line 2.

"The special racing metal arrived just recently. That material is ideal for rail systems because it is designed for exposure to different weather. We also need time to transport remaining tracks to close to portion of Line 2 from our depot in Santolan," San Juan said.

Once the fixtures were installed, San Juan said, Administrator of LRT line 2 would increase to 100,000 during opening of classes. He said ridership would grow to 340,000 daily since the Line 2 was fully operational in October this year.

By October, the P13 billion line 2 railway would extend all the way to Legarda in Manila.

We target to reach the maximum ridership of Line 2 of 500,000. This ridership may settle at first of P14 and do the math," Pajardo said.

83 Metro schools to hike tuition

WITH ALL SHE HAS
A woman resident of Phase Six 3, Barangay Kaunlaran, in Caloocan, Quezon City, trains a garden hose at the blaze that has gobbled up the house of her neighbors yesterday (Joe Aytonio)

By Dona Pazolagui

WOE-BE-tide! More expensive commitment goods? Then, brace yourself for higher tuition.

The Commission on Higher Education (Ched) has announced that 83 of the 200 college and universities in Metro Manila would raise tuition by an average of P68 per unit from the current P614.50 per unit rates.

Last year, 79 schools raised their tuition by an average of P50 per unit.

214 of 1,180 nationwide

As far for this year, 214 out of the total 1,180 tertiary schools nationwide have declared a tuition increase of an average of P35.48 per unit.

This is an 11.4 percent increase over the current national average tuition of P313.20 per unit.

Metro Manila schools gained the highest average tuition increase.

The next highest increase was in Region 7. Twenty-two of the 66 tertiary schools there would increase tuition by an average P24.49 per unit.

Region 11 posted the third highest increase with 16 of its 66 schools raising their tuition by an average P14.33 per unit.

More schools expected

However, the Ched's data is not yet complete.

Six regions have not yet submitted their data, reportedly because they are busy with examinations.

They have until May 31 to finish their consultations.

Last year, 208 out of the 1,180 tertiary schools nationwide increased their tuition by an average P52.10 per unit.

Tertiary schools enjoy a tuition deregulation policy.

Consultations needed

Under present guidelines, schools can only increase their tuition as long as their local consultations with students and the faculty.

Ashley Ched chair Rex Bolaños Bacani declared they would do away with deregulation and would peg tuition increases on the inflation rate.

Anything higher than the inflation rate would need Ched's approval, Bacani had said.

MetroBriefs

New QC salons

THE QUEZON City's board of canvassers has finally proclaimed the winners in the congressional and city council race for the city's two districts. Vincent "Bingbong" Crisologo, who ran under the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrat Party (Lakas-CMD), won as congressman in District 1. In District 2, Mary Dimaculangan, a neophyte councilor, emerged as the winner in the congressional contest with a total of 126,686 votes. She defeated reelectionist Representative Bayani Fernando and former congressman Clarito Barcelon. In the council race, reelectionist Nanette Castelo-Daza topped the list representing with 88,300 votes. Earlier, the Commission on Elections proclaimed Mayor Elalina Zuñiga Belmonte as the only winning congressman for the city's third district. Elisa Santos

Opening secured

SOME 300 members of the National Capital Region Police Office will be deployed to assist schools in Metro Manila for the classes start next month. (by part "Tyler Rafe Pascual)

2004," MMDA chief Director Bautista the last year ushering in the end of Mayor Lito Atienza's term. Atienza ordered all the MMDA traffic aides in command to help alleviate the traffic problem caused by the hundreds of thousands of students flocking to various schools, universities and colleges in the metropolis. The Commission directed the traffic aides to coordinate closely with the school authorities in determining the "problem areas" and address the security requirements of each educational institution. Rico Santos

Boy, 14, shot

QUEZON CITY, 14, was sleeping inside a makeshift sidewalk in Caloocan City when a bullet ripped through his head early this morning. He died shortly in the security guard Sato Mark, 21, was in at his post in Magsaysay Mercantile Enterprises on the Bagumbong where a suspect entered the establishment and opened fire. The victim died on the way to the hospital in Davao City.

The chemotherapy session, administered by his physician, Dr. Lilia Yu in July 2002, was completed hoping that it would cure Danboy.

But Charito was dismayed when they visited Dr. Allan Recto of St. Luke's Medical Center for the second time in March for further therapeutic analysis. The doctor told her that the chemotherapy didn't heal Danboy and that a bone marrow transplant (BMT) was his only chance of survival.

P2 million bill

Charito teaches at the Davao del Sur State College and her husband works as a chief cook in Japan. Their combined income is not enough for a BMT, which costs P2 million.

Charito, in her letter to the Inquirer, said that their finances had already been exhausted due to Danboy's monthly medication and chemotherapy.

Now, Danboy's hair is growing back, but this reminds Charito that her son's life is a race against time. They are hoping that kindhearted readers would

DANBOY

help them save their son.

They can be reached at # 8, Blk. 34, Lt. 8, Nicorille Subdivision Cagayan Extn., Panabo City, Davao del Norte, or through cellphone (0917) 3259684.

Donations can also be sent to the account of Mrs. Charito Alba with account no. 2675-0366-31 at BPI, Tagum City Davao del Norte branch. Jocelyn Uy

Danboy hoping for a second chance

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD Jewel Ann Alba is among the days when he could still frolic around the neighborhood with his friends.

He is afflicted with Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia (CML), a rare and deadly type of blood cancer, which now confines him mostly at home.

"Ito ang no-longer-play-outside," lamentes he in person to reflections. As much as he wants to go to school, he can't, or his tender bones were warned," his mother Charito said.

Chemotherapy

Danboy, as what his family fondly calls him, underwent chemotherapy for 15 months, receiving three times a week. On one base day he had to make from his home in Panabo City to Tagum City to the hospital in Davao City.

The chemotherapy session, administered by his physician, Dr. Lilia Yu in July 2002, was completed hoping that it would

MMDA's Fernando condones abuses by men

I TRIED to be a big fan of Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chair Bayani Fernando. He's been relentless in cleaning up the sidewalks of smokers. He's been successful in unsnarling the traffic knots in the metropolis.

This guy Fernando, I told myself, is the type of leader I can back and support of Metro Manilans. On cleaning up the sidewalks and keeping traffic moving, yes, but not on trampling upon the rights of poor people.

Some of Fernando's men's troopers are abusive, and he seems to condone their behavior.

I found that out when I brought before him a taxi conductor who was beaten up with overbearing by MMDA men for allegedly picking up a sidewalk. The conductor, Alexander Sy, a tiny man, suffered a broken right arm after he got hit by blows.

Why did I bring Sy to Fernando? Because I have a problem series programs on the radio and television that instantly addresses grievances of ordinary people against abuses of government personnel. For those who don't know yet, their programs is titled "Sumbong mo kay Tulfo."

Now back to the complaint of Alexander Sy. My staff and I were given the runaround after I met with the MMDA chair at his office. Fernando went through the motions of calling up subordinates to attend to Sy's complaint.

But when I came to Fernando's office with Sy the following day, we were greeted from one official to another. First, it was the chief of the sidewalk clearing unit, then the MMDA general manager, then the chief of the traffic operations center, then the chief of the MMDA legal service. All of them required us to make a formal complaint against one of the troopers, Rommel Flordido.

Despite the overwhelming proof that the MMDA trooper, Flordido or he could give his side on the trumped-beating incident and perhaps identify his companion who also allegedly attacked Sy.

When my staff went back to Fernando's area unveiling to rob or complaints and writing the column in my office, Fernando was already singing a different tune.

Fernando insinuated that Sy got his comeuppance because he loafed some at Flordido. That was Flordido's version of the incident. I told him over the phone that the law condones Sy, who looked like he couldn't even hurt a fly, would be too scared of MMDA law enforcers to do that.

But the MMDA chair stood by his man. He wouldn't even wait for an investigation to be conducted on the incident. I couldn't help shaking my head as I heard him tell me about Flordido's version of the incident.

And then, as if by chance, another witness other comes to my office complaining about an abusive MMDA enforcer. Robert Llanera, a 24-year-old employee of being punched in the stomach by an MMDA man who took him in custody for allegedly hogging lane measures. The punching was witnessed by his son, Robert Jr., who attended his parents.

Llanera said he was on his way to meet with a fellow blood mastered when he was ambushed by the roundup of beggars.

He insisted that Llanera was caught begging, which is illegal.

Grousing Llanera was caught begging, why did he have to be punched in the stomach while he was being led to the MMDA van that would take him to a safe area?

* * *

Fernando's defense of his men reminds me of the defunct Presidential Security Command (PSC) during the times of the late former Presidential Marcos. Many PSC men abused civilians, but they were not punished.

I asked a PSC officer once why the command didn't punish its abusive members.

The officer's reply was that if an abusive member was punished, the officers would be demoralized and would no longer work.

Perhaps that's Fernando's mindset. He would rather take brickbats from the public than punish abusive MMDA men so they will continue to work efficiently.

* * *

For exposing the cruelty of doctors towards patients at the Rizal Medical Center where she had undergone training, nursing student Elsie Villarual is being harassed by her school, the Philippine Women's University (PWU).

The PWU school of nursing apparently is pressured by the RMC administration, is hazing them hard on Villarual.

PWU wants her to apologize to the school for dragging it into trouble with the hospital.

But she finds no reason to apologize. "I did the right thing when I exposed the abusive doctors at the Rizal Medical Center," she said.

I don't PWU hopes it has a student who has a high moral sense of value?

Suspect in teller's slay now a fugitive

By Leila B. Salaverria

AFTER presenting himself to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and providing them of evidence, the prime suspect in the rape-murder of bank teller Candice Lucio is now in hiding.

NBI agents yesterday learned not to Lagunes in a bid to arrest Rolmo Bayot after he did not heed the Thursday deadline set for his surrender.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said that a team from the NBI's National Capital Region Division went to Lagunes in search for Bayot, who is the son of Immigration intelligence official Bienvenido Bayot.

"The NBI and the PNP (Philippine National Police) are looking for Bayot. We will not stop until we find him," Wycoco told reporters.

Meanwhile, NBI chief lawyer Edmund Ntagay said that people close to Bayot had now surrender before to the bureau for the suspect had not shown himself yet.

The NBI stepped into the case of Lucio after the police asked the bureau to conduct a parallel probe of her death.

On Saturday last week, a day after he and Philippe Bianchi were charged for the bank teller's death, Bayot went to the NBI to submit samples of his fingerprints and footprints and to undergo drug testing and a medical examination.

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